SELF PUBLISHER!

MAGAZINE

Cover Feature

Will Lill Comics

T. Warren Montgomery Interview

And Monte's World Sneak Peek!

Interviews

Sean Duffield

Randy Valiente

Devon Devereaux

Mike Garley

Articles

The Fishbowl Chronicles

20 Questions

A Written Word

SNEAK PEEK!

The Realmscape Wars

And: Eponymous

Issue Number

67

August 2013

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SHAURYA
THE RABHAS INCIDENT
DRAGO BENTLEY
INFINITY
WINTER CITY
E FELLOWSHIP OF THE GALLOWS
BLEK
DYNAGIRL
THE REALMSCAPE WARS
ALL NEW
CLOUD 9 COMIX
COMING SOON
FOR IOS, ANDROID & KINDLE FIRE
CLOUD COMIX

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Let's Get Real...

By Ian Shires

Hello again, faithful readers! I have been doing a lot of work in the last couple months on the websites, and moving things about, so I hope people aren't getting lost in the dust. Unfortunately, the changes are not over yet, and I'm still trying to nail down exactly what to do with certain parts. I really hope that you who are reading this will look on it all as an opportunity to help us build things the way YOU want them to be. The Self Publisher Association is, and always has been, intended to be all about change—reflecting it, and helping lead into it. It's about building new tools for all to use to better enjoy the network, and helping to make it more likely that publishers can survive and keep bringing people the things they might like—if they could only learn about them and find them. So right here, in the middle of my editorial, I am making a plea: Come to our website and join in conversation in our forums. Tell us what you want us to be doing and what you like and dislike about things, so that we know, and can work on what you want us to be—instead of trying to do the things we THINK you might like.

http://www.selfpubmag.com/forum/forumview.htm

I've made some more design changes this issue, which I am hoping people will like. Also, I've been learning some new things in the design and page layout work—I may get good at it someday! I am still going to look into developing an internship-type program with local colleges to try to get more hands and eyes and ideas into how the magazine looks, and faces today's device readers. Finding the right balance of things is important; I continue to struggle to get more reviewers on board with us, and finding time to do reviews myself has been problematic with the rest of what's been going on. It's really hard for me to get the right set of priorities in line, when there are more "tier one" projects to complete than I can complete myself. Taking one thing at a time isn't working enough either, as by the time one thing is finished, the rest have suffered long enough that people don't have confidence in them getting done anymore. Our big problem is how many people care about the SPA and the projects we COULD be doing. Everyone wants to see things done, but no one seems to want to pull together and make it really happen.

I have always tried to lay it all on the line when letting people know what's going on—and that's it, folks. For us to really be a community, and have a healthy hobby/business- level small press, we need to break free of the idea that big new technology things are going to save us... and make our own place that our fans can use to learn about us. I continue to be confounded by our not crossing the 1,000 download mark. we've gone around 500-600 every issue... we climb a little bit each issue, but we have not hit the critical mass I really thought we should have had about five issues ago. I am calling on each of you: get involved. Be an activist. Let's make this magazine—and the community of websites behind it—work. I know it can be done. That's where we're at. Now, let's dig into this issue and see what everyone else is up to.

Next Issue: Earth Dream!

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For Mature Audiences (18+)

Will Lill Comics

T. Warren Montgomery
Interviewed by Louise Cochran-Mason

T. Warren Montgomery is a comic book writer, artist, letterer and (has recently become a) publisher.

He is originally from Chicago, but has lived in Portland, Oregon since the age of nine. He started drawing the cartoons from the Sunday comic strips when he was 11, and progressed from there.

After art school, he started submitting work to publishers. His first job in comics was as illustrator on a story called The Exiles (Blue Moon Comics) in 1988. He worked as a letterer in 90s. After a break (due to other work and personal commitments), he returned to comics around 2010, lettering for Surprising Comics.

As well as work-for-hire jobs, he also founded Will Lill Comics to publish his own line of comics. The publishing company is named after Warren's parents, Willie and Lillian (who always encouraged him to start self publishing).

Monty's World is a four-issue anthology series which introduces the Will Lill universe and brings back a few characters from Warren's comic book past. One of these revived stories is The Exiles, Warren's first comic book job¸— which is actually being published for the first time (due to financial constraints it was never released by Blue Moon Comics). Monty's World will also showcase some of his work with other publishers, such as Northeastern Press, Leaf Comics, and Surprising Comics.

This month, SP! spoke to Warren about his work.

SP!: How is the Monty's World anthology series going?

TWM: Well, slowly. My plan was to make it bi-monthly, but I've learned that (for now) that won't be possible with all the other projects that I am working on. So, I will release the last two issues when they are finished. But, I have been very happy with the re-

List of Warren's Credits:

Title(s)	Publisher	Job	Notes
The Exiles	Blue Moon Comics	artist	short, unpublished until Monty's World #1
Kill Marvel, Bill the Bull, Flowers on the Razerwire, Babylon Crush, Dark Angel/Razor, Outlaw Nation	Boneyard Press	letterer	
Razor, Razor/ Dark Angel, Deadboys, Code Name: heavy Metal, Savage Blood	London Night Studios	letterer	Designed Razor logo.
Dartman #1	Northeastern Press	artist	Monty's World Special
Bloodshed	Damage Comics	letterer	
Fantasea #1	Black Unicorn Pub	letterer, inker	
Surprising Comics Presents, All Surprising Comics	Surprising Comics	letterer	Also logo design
Red Leaf Presents, The Leaf, Zomboid, etc	Red Leaf Comics	letterer	Also logo design
Vamperotica #12	Brainstorm Comics	letterer	
Blackstone Chronicles, God Project, Mis-Adventures of Adam West (ongoing), Secret Lives of Julie Newmar, Female Force Cher, Baneberry Creek, etc. (inking): Cher and Ruth Bader Ginsburg bio comic.	Bluewater Comics/Blue Water Productions	letterer	Was also production manager for a time
Monty's World anthology	Will Lill Comics	Writer, artist, colorist, letterer	Self publishing

views, so far. And Issues 3 and 4 will be the best ones.

SP!: Three of the Monty's World characters are getting their own titles. Can you tell us about them?

TWM: Yes. Later this year, I have plans on a Lightning Marval oneshot. LM started out as a parody of Superman when I first created him during the late 90s. Freddie Fruit is an alien from the planet Wut and was adopted by his earth parents Bo and Betty Lou Fruit after his ship crash landed in Happytoe, OR. The oneshot will also focus on his nemesis Pooka Dah Hah and his henchmen the Armpit. Should be fun. John Kirby: Firefox will also get a one shot. John is, what I like to call, my classic hero. His Firefox half is from another world and defends the universe, while his John half is a farmer in a small town in Oregon. Issue 3 of MW will get things started with a 10-page story.

Early next year, there will be a C.J. Walker, Bounty Hunter-ohn Kirby: Firefox mini-series. C.J. was first created in the late 80s, when I submitted an eight-page story to Dark Horse Comics for their DHC Presents title. Jonathan Gilbert, who wrote the ten-pager, will write the mini-series.

The Exiles story is one I drew in 1988 that was never published, so I contacted the creator Lloyd Smith and he gave me permission to do so. Only three chapters were completed before it was cancelled, so I will print them in MW and later reprint them as one issue. They are already compiled in digital and selling really well at DriveThru Comics.

Dartman, featured in MW Special, is not my creation. This issue was published originally in 1991. Created by Richard Irving, no other issues were released. I asked Richard if I could republish it and he had no problem with that. I felt that when it was originally published, it didn't look like a comic book. It was printed on very poor paper and just crappy. Dartman is a private detective named Gary Gifford living in Providence, Rhode Island. His partner's father was murdered at a stunt rehearsal, so it is up to Dartman to revenge his death.

Richard would like to do more stories, but time will tell if that ever happens. Maybe next year.

SP!: Who are Monty's World's main contributors?

TWM: Writing-wise, new stories will be written by me and Jonathan Gilbert (C.J. Walker). Jon allowed me to reprint his Oddball story in MW 2. I love Jon's work and have been hoping to do more with him. Other stories that appear in the anthology were printed by other publishers whom I have done lettering for. The Leaf story from MW #1, written by John Helmer, is a character from Red Leaf Comics (www.redleafcomics.com). Depthon , written by Steve Skeates (DC Comics writer of Aquaman & Hawk and Dove) is from Surprising Comics created by Mark Davis. Most are 25 to 30 years old. Not the greatest thing in the world, but I love them.

Art-wise, Ron Stewart (http://ron8thwave.deviantart.com) does a great job with my LM and Depthon stories from MW #1. I have known him for a couple of years and he is a very talented artist. You will be seeing more from him. Stuart Berryhill does a great job on the Leaf story. Bruce Cashman, a Facebook friend, provided the Exiles cover for issue #2. He's another talented artist that I hope to do more work with in the future. Rounding out is Luis Rivera (http://lururinu.deviantart.com), who did a fantastic job on the C.J. Walker cover for MW #4. I first saw his work while lettering Adam West pages for Bluewater Comics, which he had drawn. A great talent.

SP!: What's next for Will Lill Comics after the initial Monty's World mini-series and spin offs?

TWM: Well, I will continue to focus on Firefox, CJ and Lightning Marval stories. Plus a webcomic or two, depending on time.

SP!: Why self-publish?

TWM: Basically to publish what I want. I don't buy a lot of comics these days, because the stories just aren't what I grew up with. I'm old and old-fashioned. I like fun, entertaining stories and not corporate lost-and-confused universes. I've had my own characters on file for 10 years or more, and I figure it is about time I did something with them. Not planning to get rich, just want to put stuff out there that I like to read.

SP!: Do you think the internet has made it easier for people to self-publish and distribute their self-published work?

TWM: A big fat YES! Without the technology we have today, I would not be able to self-publish my work without spending hundreds of dollars. The cost would just be too much. Digital publishing to Comixology, DriveThu Comics, Kindle, and other platforms costs nothing. Print-on-demand places like Indy Planet is perfect, because there is no need to spend hundreds of dollars printing books that may take years to sell. Webcomics also are a great way to get your work seen by many.

SP!: How does self-publishing compare with work-for-hire?

TWM: Less money, more freedom. Work-for-hire has more deadlines. I have none when I am working on my books.

SP!: Did you learn a lot about marketing and promotion from the vari-

(Continued on page 8)

ous publishers you worked with?
TWM: Working with Darren Davis at Bluewater Productions, I've picked up a few things. Darren is great at marketing. Sometimes, I'll just copy his press releases and revise them. We meet from time-to-time; he gives me pointers on how to promote my titles and such. He is more of a marketing person then I am.

SP!: Are you working on own and other's materials concurrently? Are you also doing lettering, writing or illustrations for other companies?
TWM: Right now, I still do lettering for Bluewater on many titles. Plus, there are other individuals/publishers that I am working with and their titles should be out later this year. I've also been doing more coloring as of late, which includes finishing the last seven pages for Bluewater's "Curse of the Mumy #2" (written by Bill Mumy, art by Ron Stewart) and coloring issue #3. Plus, doing flats for a couple of colorists. I try to overwork myself as much as possible, but learn as much as I can. Which is why it is fun to self-publish.

SP!: Does Monty's World accept submissions?
TWM: Currently, no. Maybe in the future, but I doubt it. Most of the people I work with are people that I have known a long time or worked with on other books. I'm a very picky person.

SP!: You sell the print version of Monty's World through Indy Planet/ Ka-Blam? How would you rate them as a POD printer/shop?
TWM: So far, I love what they do. My last two orders shipped pretty fast and I like that. But, they were not my first choice. Prior to using them, I (as well as many others) used ComixPress. But they decided to close their doors, which is a shame. Ka-Blam has been a great replacement. And I have actually sold a few of the titles.

SP!: You sell the digital version of Monty's World through digital Amazon Kindle, Barnes & Noble Nook, DriveThru Comics and Graphicly. How would you rate them?
TWM: So far, I've done better with DriveThru then the others. I love their marketing tools to help publishers promote their titles. Monty's World #1 has been accepted by Comixology Submit, but as of this interview, it has not been added. I think all places work great. Getting someone to buy them on those platforms is where the work comes in.

SP!: When did you get started in comics?
TWM: My first work was in 1988 with a company called Blue Moon Comics. They were going to publish a 52 page anthology called Awesome Comics. After submitting samples to them from an ad in Comic Buyer's Guide, I received a four-part, ten-page series to pencil and ink called The Exiles (which is now published in my anthology). It was a sci-fi superhero series. Fun to work on, but due to low orders it was never published. My first published work was Dartman in 1991 (also reprinted). I did pencils and lettering. A few years later I started hand-lettering for small publishers like Boneyard Press, London Night Studios and many smaller companies. Then I took a break. And in 2010 I was asked to letter a 6-page story and was bitten by the bug again. So far, no work from Marvel and DC, but who knows? Maybe the welcome letter got lost in the mail.

SP!: How has comic book lettering changed since you started?
TWM: In the past, when I hand lettered, I would spend about a week or so lettering a 22-page book. Now, it takes a day or two. Programs like Illustrator and CorelDraw are great to use. It cuts the amount of time spent on production. The downside is that so many great hand-letterers are out of work. Very few companies use hand-lettering. And others have staff letterers, which cut down on the need for letterers.

SP!: What advice would you give someone who wanted to become a letterer? Are there many resources for letterers online (e.g. for fonts)? Is there software you would recommend?
TWM: First, study the art of lettering. In comics, people like: Ben Oda, Tom Orzechowski, Todd Klein, John Costanza, Gasper Saladino and more are great at what they do. They did not need a computer. Buy a computer and learn Illustrator or CorelDraw. Most companies have in-house lettering, so freelancing can be tough. Study and practice and don't stop submitting. Even if it's small press and for free.

SP!: What advice would you give someone who wanted to become an artist?
TWM: Draw, draw, draw, draw, draw, draw… DRAW! Practice makes perfect.

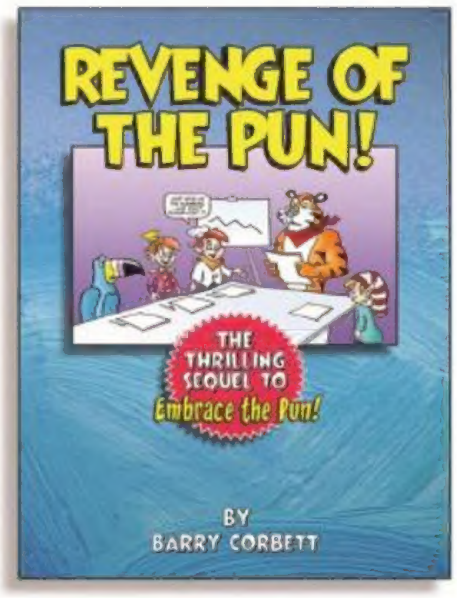
SP!: Will you be going to any shows/conventions?
TWM: I plan to wait until next year for Portland Wizard World 2014 and Stumptown Fest 2014. If I can make it happen late this year, then that would be cool. But only on the local comic con scene.

SP!: Is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't covered?
TWM: Hopefully people that have read our books will enjoy them and keep coming back for more. I'm not trying to change the world or rewrite the comic books; I just want to create stories that are fun and entertaining. Explore a new world of Heroes!

Weblinks:
www.warrenmontgomery.com
www.facebook.com/montgomerygrafix
www.twitter.com/wlcomics

Embrace your Inner Punster!

Barry Corbett's 2nd tribute to the "lowest form of humor" features panel cartoons that have appeared in *Reader's Digest, Barrons, First Magazine, American Legion, Christianity Today, Lacrosse Magazine, Medical Economics, Kid Zones, The Artist's Magazine, True West,* and many local newspapers.



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Bronze Medal – Independent Publisher Magazine
2011 IPPY Awards

"A Great Collection—Highly Recommended"
C. F. Hill, Amazon Top 50 Reviewer, November, 2010

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SNEAK PEEK!

MONTY'S WORLD

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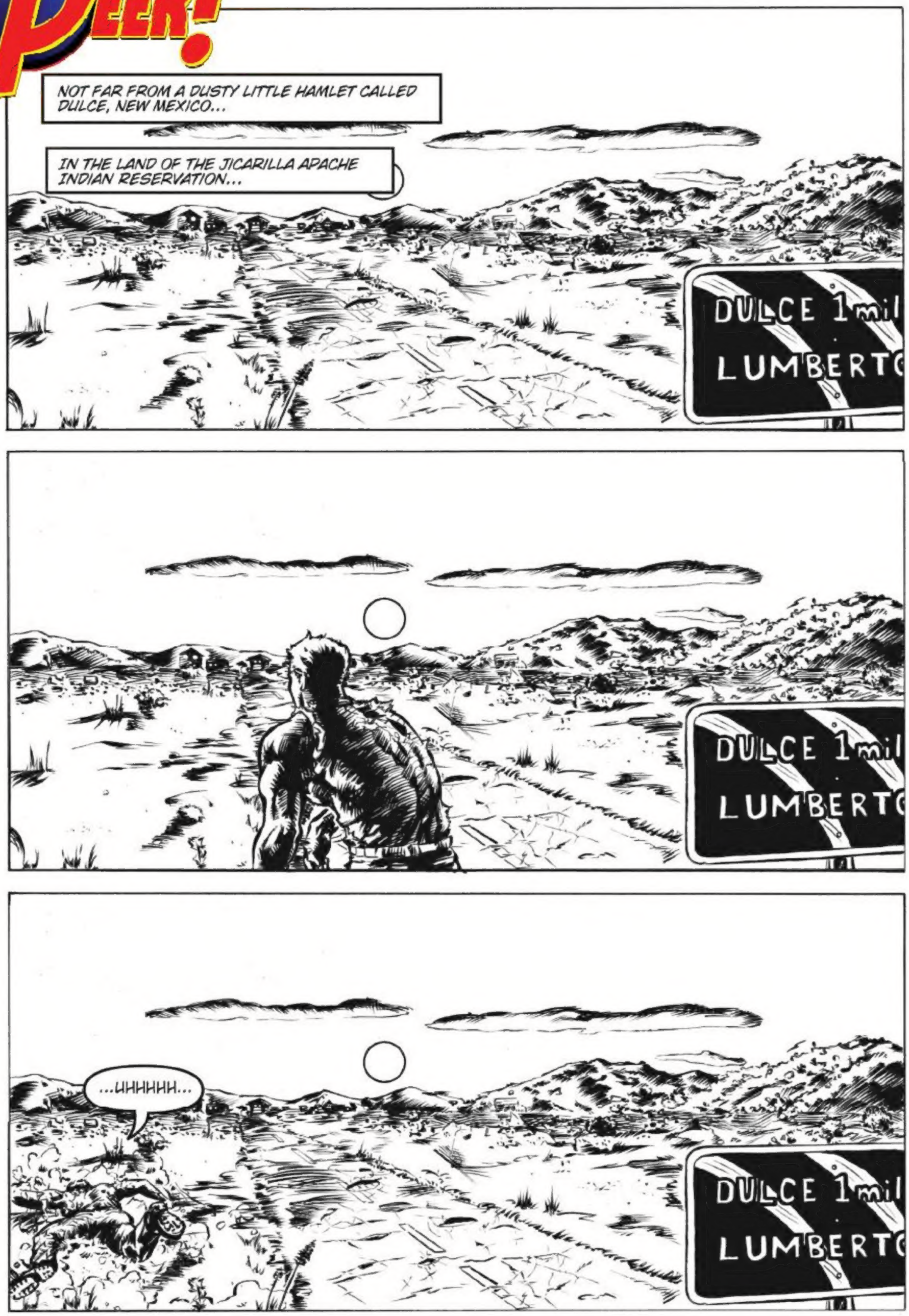
Steve Perry
Artists
Steve Williams
Stuart Berryhill



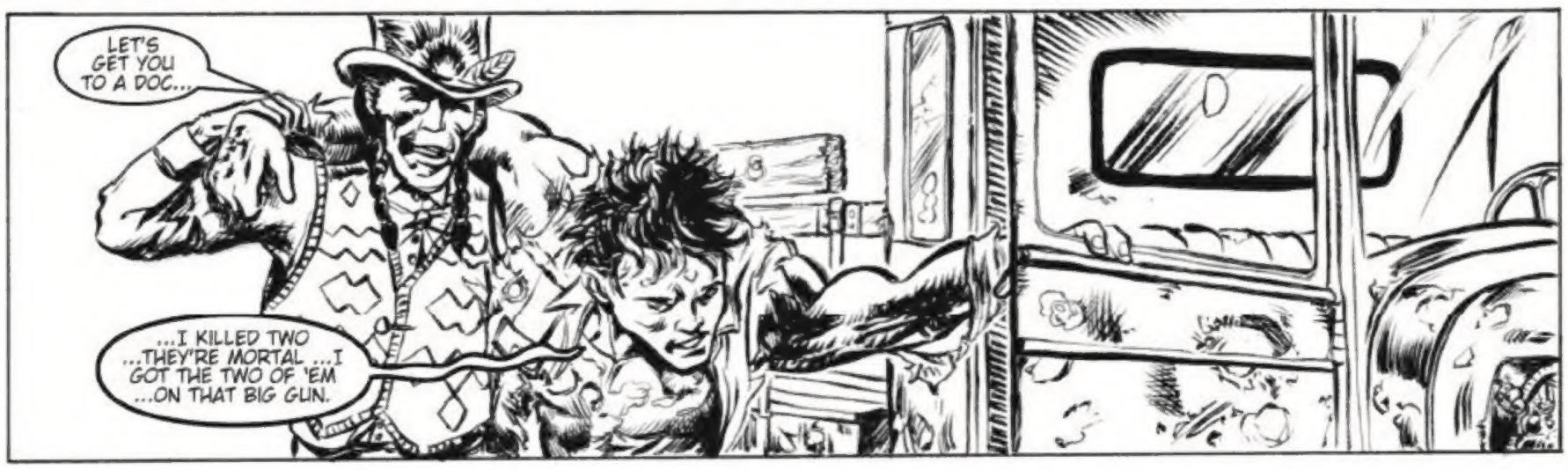
SNEAK PEEK!

MONTY'S WORLD

For more, visit:
www.warrenmontgomery.com

MY NAME IS PAUL SNYDER AND I AM DYING.
I HOLD A RANK OF PFC. 3RD CLASS IN THE BLACK BERETS, SUS, ULTRA 7 - IT'S A RANK THAT DOES NOT EXIST IN THE REAL WORLD.

BEFORE MY FINGERS AND ALL THE TOES OF MY LEFT FOOT GOT BURNED OFF I HAD TO SALUTE JUST ABOUT EVERYONE IN MY UNIT, ALL THE GREEN BERET MAGGOTS ATTACHED TO US, ALL THOSE DELTA FORCE JERKS ABOVE US AND EVEN THE CIVILIANS WHO DIDN'T EVEN HOLD RANKS OUTSIDE OF SPECIAL AGENT.
THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH BLACK OPS PERSONNEL STRUCTURING...
...EVEN AN ULTRA 7 SECURITY CLEARANCE ISN'T WORTH SQUAT IN TERMS OF RESPECT.
EVEN IN BLACK OPS A GRUNT IS A GRUNT, AND I DOUBT I'LL BE DOING MUCH SALUTING ANY MORE.
WHOA, BUDDY... WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU??
...SEVEN FEET TALLGRAYS ...WAR.
...MY BUDDIES ...ALL DEAD.
DRINK THIS, MY FRIEND...
THIS GUY'S IN SHOCK.



YEAH, MY FRIEND ...OKAY.
...TALLGRAYS. I GOT TWO...
THE OLD JACARILLA INDIAN SAVED MY LIFE THAT DAY IN AUGUST OF 1979. I WOULD LATER LEARN THAT ONLY TWO OTHERS...
...THREE OUT OF 69 CRACK TROOPS ...ALL OF US HARD TRAINED AND AS RUGGED AS THE NEW MEXICAN MOUNTAINS ...ONLY THREE OF US WOULD SURVIVE...

MONTY'S WORLD

NO ONE LIKED THE TALLGRAYS AND THEY DID NOT LIKE US HUMANS. ALTHOUGH WE KNEW THEY RAN THE BIO-ENGINEERING PROJECTS AT DULCE...

...AND THEIR TECHNOLOGY ENABLED INVENTIONS THAT FUNDED HALF THE SHADOW GOVERNMENTS' BUDGETS ...WE ALSO KNEW THEY HAD A NASTY HABIT INVOLVING THE BOVINE ADRENAL FLUIDS. BUT THE FLUIDS OF "HUMAN CHILDREN" WAS OFTEN WHISPERED, AND WHISPERED SECRETLY, AND MANY A SOLDIER HELD THE TALLGRAYS IN MORAL CONTEMPT FOR JUST THE IDEA OF IT.

WHEN THE SEVEN FOOT TALL GRAY HEARD THIS COMMENT IT STOPPED, TURNED SLOWLY TO JOHN AND ME AND SPOKE SOMETHING IN ITS OWN LANGUAGE.

WE MIGHT NOT HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE WORDS, BUT THE TONE WAS UNMISTAKABLE. JOHNNY HUTCHINSON DREW BACK AND PUNCHED THE THING RIGHT WHERE THE NOSE SHOULD BE.

...ITS HEAD BURST LIKE A ROTTEN MELON FROM THE IMPACT OF THE BLOW AND IT SLUMPED TO THE FLOOR, DEAD.

TWO OF THE SMALL GRAYS - THE LITTLE FELLAS, WE CALLED THEM, THREE AND FOUR FEET TALL-- SAW THIS HAPPEN AND SOUNDED AN ALARM. WITHIN THIRTY SECONDS THE MAIN HANGAR FILLED FROM BOTH ENDS WITH HUMANS AND ALIENS.

THERE WERE FIFTEEN TALL GRAYS AND MAYBE TWICE THAT NUMBER OF THE LITTLE GUYS, WHO SERVED THEM. ALMOST SEVENTY HUMAN SECURITY FORCES RESPONDED.

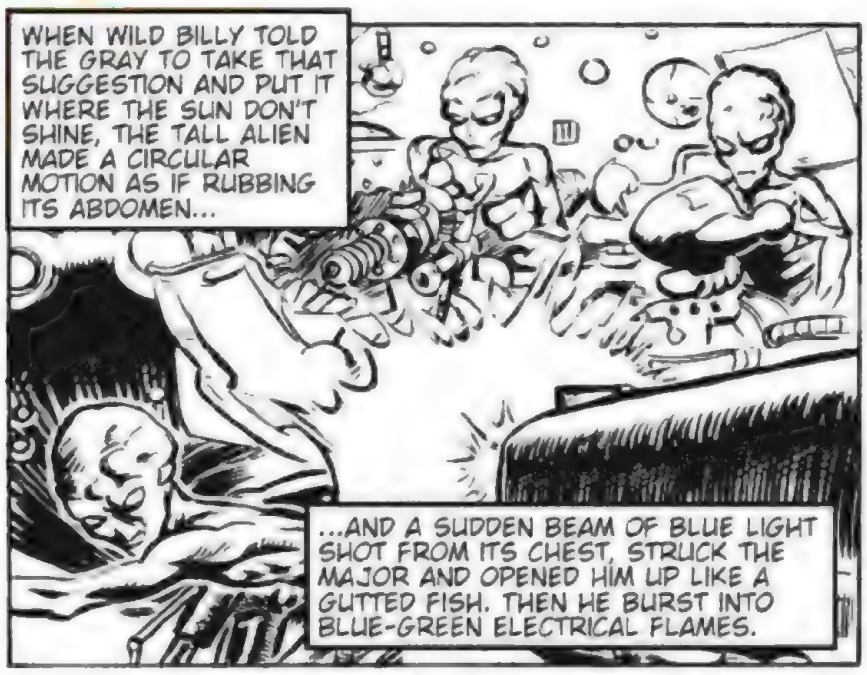
MAJOR WILLIAM "WILD BILLY" SPIER STRODE IN LIKE HE OWNED THE PLACE, WHICH HE SORT OF DID, HIS IVORY HANDLED .45'S-- A MATCHING SET TO PATTON'S - UNFLAPPED, AND DEMANDED TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON.

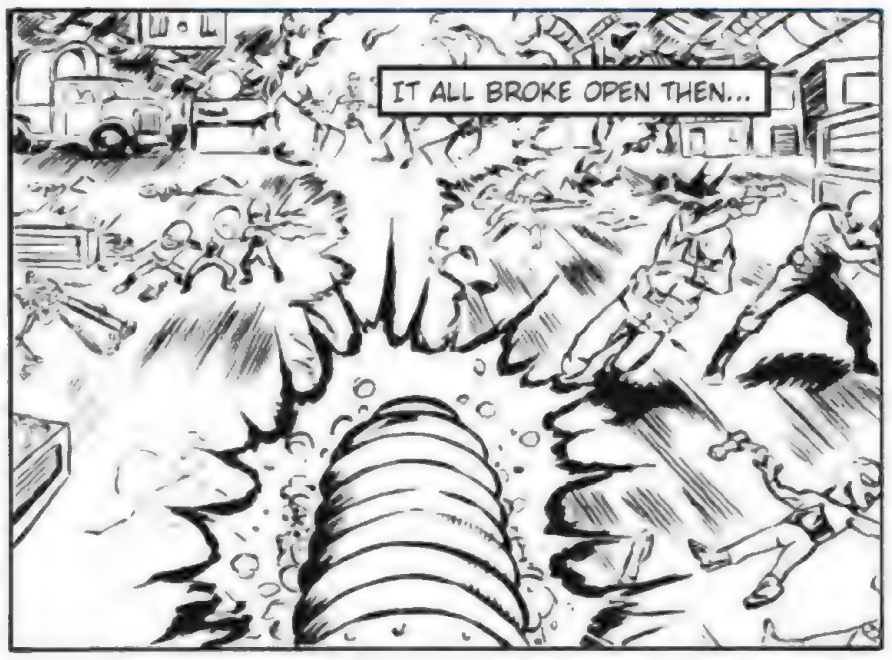
ONE OF THE TALL GRAYS SPOKE IN PERFECT ENGLISH, WITH NO DISCERNABLE ACCENT, POINTING TO THE DEAD TALLGRAY AT JOHNNY'S AND MY FEET.

IT DEMANDED JOHNNY'S ADRENAL FLUIDS, AND THEN QUOTED THE OLD TESTAMENT, LEVITICUS 21:1'19-21, IT SAID, ABOUT A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.

MONTY'S WORLD

For more, visit:
www.warrenmontgomery.com


WHEN WILD BILLY TOLD THE GRAY TO TAKE THAT SUGGESTION AND PUT IT WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE, THE TALL ALIEN MADE A CIRCULAR MOTION AS IF RUBBING ITS ABDOMEN...
...AND A SUDDEN BEAM OF BLUE LIGHT SHOT FROM ITS CHEST, STRUCK THE MAJOR AND OPENED HIM UP LIKE A GUTTED FISH. THEN HE BURST INTO BLUE-GREEN ELECTRICAL FLAMES.



Caging the Paper Tiger!
A Chat with Sean Duffield

Interviewed by Darren Worrow

Caging the Paper Tiger!

In the summer of 2004, the British small press comics scene was treated to "*a roaring great read!*" as the slogan read on its orange photocopied cover. The first issue of Paper Tiger Comix was out there, an anthology of crazy and surreal sequential art pieces and more standard comic stories from a collective of the most up-and-coming cartoonists at the time.

Hailing out of Brighton, England's most offbeat and artistically vibrant town, its editor Sean Duffield managed to produce a further three issues. The fourth one, which was far more ambitious, with a glossy finish came in a package that also contained art cards, a badge, and a music CD with an eclectic mix of underground sounds as diverse as the art and comic stories in the magazine. It was clear at this stage that Paper Tiger was reaching out beyond the comic scene and embracing other mediums of art. Whatever came next had to be big.

So, after some years of labor, Sean produced a 260-page quality bound book, "*WAR: The Human Cost*," again with a 19-track music CD to accompany it—a truly monumental moment for the publisher. The work is highly recommended and has been well received by all that reviewed it.

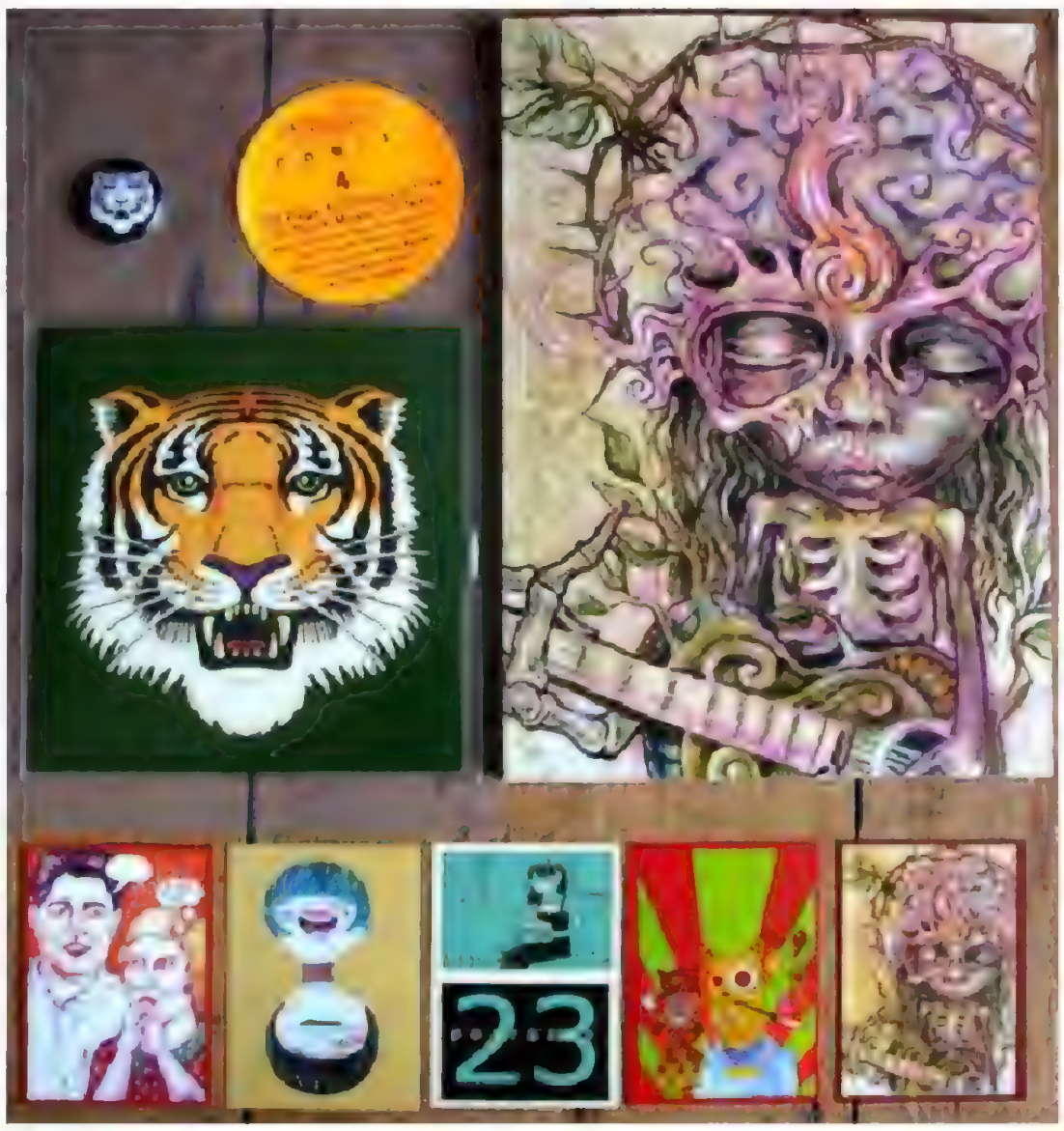
Naturally, I am thrilled to get the opportunity to introduce you to it and chat with Sean about the past, present, and future of Paper Tiger.

SP!: Hi Sean! I thought we could open by going back to 2004 and the first Paper Tiger Comix. Can you tell us about starting it up and what thoughts you had to its concept at the time?

SD: Well, I'd already had the experience of self-publishing my own zine and had been meeting like minds in Brighton, who had been making their own comics and zines. I suggested a collaborative effort to get all of our work out there and, also, to give others the chance to get their work noticed in a more unconventional and underground anthology than that which was the norm at the time. We agreed we would all chip in collectively and create a cheap and cheerful, but fairly large, print run comic (as several of us were unemployed, we opted for the photocopied approach initially). So, that's how Paper Tiger Comix was born.

SP!: Tell us about the first small press comic you self-published, Did you contribute to others prior to this?

SD: Well, I had self-published three issues of my own zine, Muzzle Mouth, which had been fairly well received in the zine/small press circles. It was a mix of articles, comics, rants, illustrations, etc. I'd also had my comic work published in a couple of anthologies prior to Paper Tiger. These included the US zine TRIC, the Canadian arts newspaper SPUR, and also the Milwaukee comix anthology RIVERWURST. That was how I made a couple of links with a couple of the international contributors, such as Tea Krulos and Patrick Theaker. I was also published in a friend's zine here in the UK called SKIRT STEAK.



SP!: Yes, I did a cartoon for Riverwurst too. I thought it was so cool to be in a US comic! So, what about your youth? What sort of comics did you read and who inspires you even today?

SD: I read whatever comics I could get my hands on growing up, I wasn't very discriminatory at all. I spent a LOT of pocket money on comics, plus my Gran and Grandad used to buy me them and my Dad also read a lot of comics, which I'd read after him. I'll mention the ones that left the biggest impression on me. I used to love picking up US comics when I could; stuff like Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew, Weird War Tales (I loved the Creature Commandos and G.I. Robot), and various others.

As for UK comics, Scream was a great horror comic for me, I loved the 13th Floor (with the elevator computer called Max) the most. I liked Doomlord and Dan Dare in the Eagle (I still think The Mekon is one of the best iconic villains). I loved Raymond Briggs (still do), Gary Larson's The Far Side was a fave, too, which later led me to the wonderful Gahan Wilson, who was obviously a huge influence on Larson. The Beano and Dandy had an influence on me (so much so, I was in both the Desperate Dan and Dennis the Menace clubs). There were the Marvel UK comics too; Transformers, Spiderman, and Zoids, and then, in my teens, Death's Head, Dragon's Claws, and Knights Of Pendragon. Oink! was a fave; the humor was great and a bit warped (whatever happened to Uncle Pigg? Hope the butchers didn't get him). I'd say, though, the most influential comic for me. as a small child and a teen, predictably, was 2000AD. I still find a lot of the stories and artwork from the late 1980s to early 90s absolutely outstanding—there was so much talent involved, it was crazy, and there was this subversive and really imaginative edge to it all. My Dad and I would make a dash for it when it came through the letterbox sometimes. If he got it first, he'd run to the toilet and lock himself in until he'd read it, much to my chagrin (his prerogative though, as he was paying for that one!). To me, that comic was as important to my youth as EC Comics was to the US kids in

(Continued on page 14)

the 50s, (it became a big influence of many members of the Underground Comix movement).

I could go on about all the comics that influenced me in my teens, too (that was my introduction to more alternative, underground, adult, European, and manga comics), but we'd be here all day! So, I'll just have to do a lazy name check of a few: Crisis, Deadline, Eightball, V for Vendetta, Hellblazer, The Incal, Viz, Martial Law, Love and Rockets, Dirty Plotte. Then, later, Zap Comix and other undergrounds like Slow Death became more easily available to me in the UK, as did the work of other greats like Charles Burns, Basil Wolverton, Dori Seda, Glenn Head, Junji Ito, Yoshihiro Tatsumi, Joe Sacco, Stephane Blanquet, etc.

SP!: Every boy had to be in the Dennis the Menace Fan Club until the googly eyes fell off the Gnasher badge so, not to confuse the American readers, our Dennis had black spikey hair and now, just to confuse them, Ding, Dong (the passwords). So, the project "War: The Human Cost," takes on a different route. It's a more themed publication. Can you take us through your thoughts and tell us something about it?

SD: Yes, well, the spark that ignited the idea for the anthology was the Bush and Blair administrations' War on Terror and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. I felt increasingly frustrated by the propaganda and refusal by government and media to acknowledge the views and stories of those millions and millions of people around the world who were opposed to the war, and those directly or indirectly affected by it.

So, one day I was reading something by Campaign Against the Arms Trade and suddenly, I had the idea of creating an anthology that raised money and awareness for CAAT and their preventative approach to war and militarism. Even more importantly in my mind, it would allow comic artists like myself, from all around the world, to have a much-needed place to share stories that were important to them and really look at the effects of war. As editor, I had in mind a well-rounded project; not just a bunch of opinions, but a work that took apart the machinations of war and conflict, the after effects, the agendas of those who benefit from it, real-life and first hand stories of people involved, the damage that propaganda causes, the inaccuracies and distortion, and also, the absurdities and satire, the dark and 'gallows humour' of such a destructive human subject matter. I also wanted there to be positive and inspiring stories from activists and people who had been through the worst and managed to create peace or effective resistance against oppressive and destructive forces. The work, although clearly not glorifying war, isn't about taking sides, there's no partisan tribalism in the work. No political ideology; rather, it's more about showing the human condition and the delusions of people who think they can 'liberate' by going to war against 'the other'. So there's not just one view or event that the book deals with— it's very diverse and delves back into history and into stories that are hardly being reported.
So, that's how the project started, and it evolved into a much larger and complex work than originally planned (from 72 to 260 pages), at it took five years to make happen in the end. Technically, it was a step up too; there's color printing throughout the book and this one cost a lot more to make.

There's lots more info on the website about specific contributors and themes. This work also got the most well-known comics names I've dealt with involved alongside the lesser known contributors. It was a privilege to talk to and get contributions from one of my heroes, the now late, great Spain Rodriguez. It was a pleasure to also receive some brilliant work from the likes of Peter Kuper, Aleksandar Zograf, Steve Bell, Colin Upton, Mack White, and many more. Even better was to get the attention of Joe Sacco, David Lloyd, Paul Gravett, and Warren Pleece, who all took time out to write shining reviews of the project for the back cover. Sadly, all this involvement and praise didn't lead to most major comics outlets, book shops and media organizations taking the project seriously, choosing to ignore the project due to its being from a two-bit publisher like myself, it seems. It's all politics! Dave's Comics in Brighton was very supportive, however, and they did a special prominent display for the book, and a few political/radical/independent bookshops were very supportive too. From those people who did take a chance with it, I did get some very good feedback, more feedback than I've ever had on a project before; the reviews were all great, and the comic is still gaining interest, albeit very slowly. As for the CD, there are lots of well-known names involved, so check the website and listen to some sound clips.

SP!: As time goes by, you seem to be permanently seeking to improve the standard. How, as editor, has your role and control changed over the years? Or do you still stick to the original ethos?

SD: Well, around about the time of Paper Tiger Comix #3, it became increasingly apparent that many contributors didn't want to have to pay a fee for a share of the comics, nor did some of the Brighton contributors want to help print up the comics, staple, and distribute them, either. So, somewhere around that time, after sounding it out with those involved I was closest to in the project, I decided to have a stronger role as editor and publisher, whilst still giving others the option to chip in and get a

(Continued on page 15)

share of the print run. This did make life a little difficult—as I was still mostly unemployed—yet I wanted to create books that looked and read as good as anything you'd get from a big alternative/underground publisher.

I put all of my life savings into printing Paper Tiger Comix #4, along with what contributors chipped in. A gamble, I know, and probably not wise business sense to make a book and CD project that cost nearly £4500 to produce, but I felt compelled to go for it and do the best job that I could.

My role as editor has become more perfectionist as a result—I've aimed to produce anthologies with as little filler as possible and concentrate on quality, as well as value for money work. This has also meant turning down quite a few submissions I was sent (often very good work that I simply couldn't print due to lack of space). This is the worst part of the role of editor, as people quite often hope or expect to get a piece they've specifically done for a comic into the finished book, and doing comics myself, I realise how disappointing and disheartening rejections can be. It's also very awkward when it's a friend or someone you've met a few times. Hopefully no one hates me or has a voodoo doll of me at home (although that would explain my increase in back and neck pains!).

I think the original ethos of the work itself has remained intact: to showcase interesting and challenging stuff that mostly isn't seen or published elsewhere.

SP!: What is next then? I understand the horror genre may well play a part?

SD: Yeah that's right. Tales of Terror has been in the pipeline for a while, now. I'm a lover of good horror, whether movies, books, or comics, and I know quite a few comics bods are big horror lovers. The anthology will be quite broad on the theme. I'm looking for fresh takes on the genre, and so far the quality of submissions is fantastic. It'll have underground-style horror comix, weird, nightmarish stuff, pure atmospheric horror, some great illustrations, homages to the 50s horror comics, and horror with satire and social commentary. Again, I'm in no rush to churn it out, I'm going to make sure the quality of the anthology is the best. This one could well be print-on-demand and/or crowd-funded to avoid increasing problems with distribution. It's going to be released alongside my very talented filmmaker friend Ant Carpendale's first Portmanteau horror film, with some great stories co-written with his girlfriend Helen Dunleavy.

AND REMEMBER...

COMICS EXPAND THE MIND!

SP!: Brighton is surely a haven for artistic flare and alternative lifestyles. Does the town bear an influence on Paper Tiger Comix?

SD: I'd say it certainly has done. It has on me. I probably wouldn't even have seriously thought of ever starting it, if I hadn't moved here. When I moved to Brighton from the north-east (Cleveland), I was exposed to zine and small press comics. A few venues had them on display for sale. This was inspiring and that led to the feeling/idea that 'I could do that'. Then, gradually meeting a lot of talented comic artists in the area, all very different and unique, and many slightly warped, really influenced the work. I think Brighton, being not only a fairly affluent and cultural town (compared to many), but also being quite a tolerant, permissive and expressive place generally, means that it's a good place to get in touch with your inner, eclectic weirdo and not be scared to do something a bit different. It also means that people will support what you're doing, because many of the local population are pretty open-minded and looking for new and unusual things. It also means that it breeds its own kind of mentality and its own kind of stories sometimes. I think I should give a mention to some of those people who lived or live in Brighton, who have contributed, and have been crucial to making the comics happen: Richard Cowdry, Lawrence Elwick, Paul O Connell, Daniel Locke, Terri Affleck, Ben Naylor, Paul Stapleton, Beebop, Daniel Hanson, Andrew Barron (Yurt), Harry Flay, Danny Noble, Cyriak, Fraser Geesin, Dan White, etc.

SP!: Are there any other cartoonists, writers, or artists you'd like to give your thumbs up to?

SD: Well, I'll avoid all the big name, established artists who don't really need plugging, and mention those that I'm currently enjoying from the 'underground,' of whom there're quite a few.

Nic Grey has just finished working on an amazing-looking graphic novel with his writing partner James Farley, about the controversial sage U.G. Krishnamurti, entitled: "This Dog Barking". I've seen some of the pages; it really does look amazing and it's very unique and interesting subject matter.

Steve Gibson is probably known to many, but I really like his regular sketchbook drawings and id spewings on Facebook; his sketches are better than a lot of artists' finished drawings and are also very funny,

(Continued on page 16)

clever and twisted. I'm glad to hear he's a got a collection of these coming out soon. Banci Cartoonist is one to watch out for; he's very prolific and producing some funny stuff.

Krent Able is immensely talented and I've enjoyed everything he's done.
I never cease to be astounded by Lawrence Elwick's work. If you ever see him sketching, he makes it look so effortless.
The Eyeball Comix collective is producing some great stuff—I'm a big fan of Paul Arserott and Robscenity.

Bunny Mazhari produces the most beautiful and interesting watercolor sketchbook drawings you're likely to see and I'd love to see a publisher produce a color collection of her work.

Rich Cowdry's stuff is always top draw; he's a great cartoonist.
Lou McKeever is doing some great political satire strips.

Andy Luke is producing some great stuff; from the autobiographical 'Absence', to the very funny 'Hold The Phones, It's Alex Jones' strips, to his wonderfully charming 'Optimus & Me,' which should appeal the child in most of us. He puts stuff up on his site daily.

Ralph Kidson's comics always put a smile on my face.

Gareth Brookes is a great writer and artist. His work is very original and funny, indeed.

Steve Tillotson creates beautiful art, and funny strips.

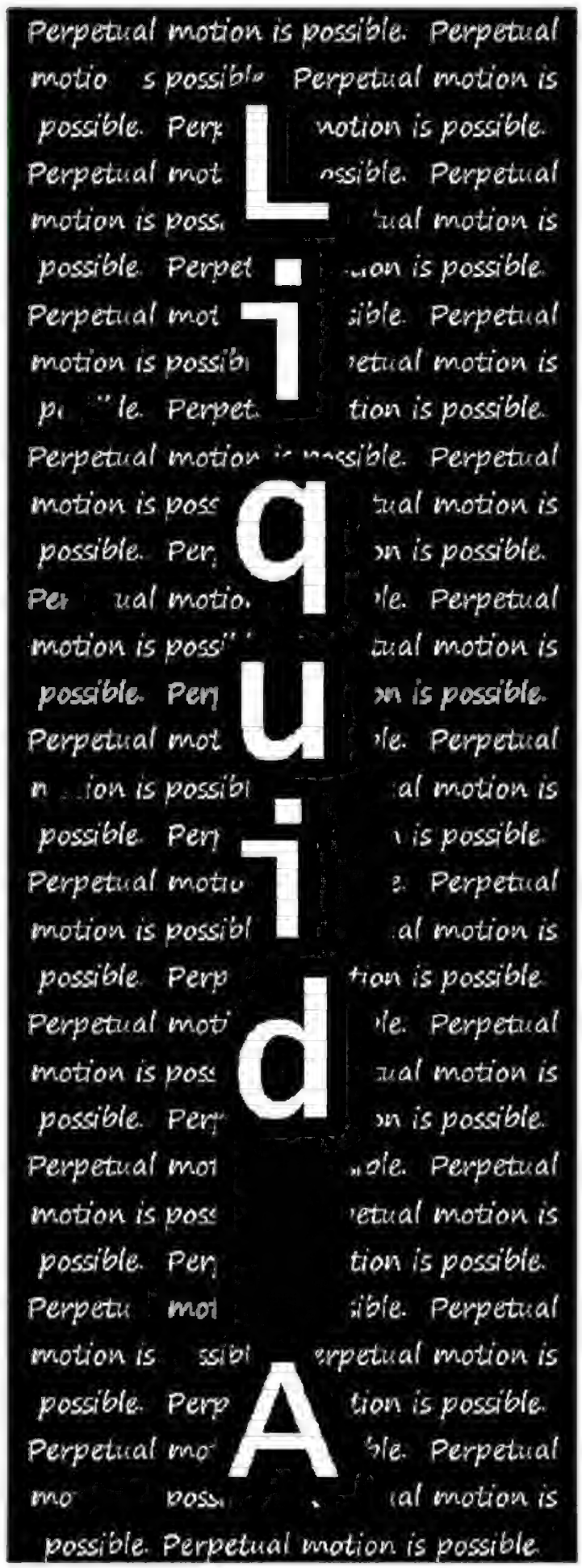
Iain Laurie, Neil Evans (Nelson Evergreen) and Brad Tuttle got crazy skills, and they're three of my favourite UK artists.
There's some great stuff coming out of the umbrella of the US based "New Underground Comix Publishers, Artists and Writers Alliance (NUCPAWA)." Kayla Escobedo, Aaron Lange, and Al Frank spring to mind.

John Orlando is putting in much work doing his own stuff and uniting others. I have to stop there. I'd love to keep going, but I'm sure I've already gone on too much!

SP!: Thanks for taking the time out to chat with us, mate! I wish you all the best, and keep doodling. Just finish, if you will, by telling our readers how they can grab their own copy and network with you?

SD: Well, as it happens, the readers are in for a treat. I've reduced Paper Tiger Comix #4 and War: The Human Cost to less than cost price on the website, www.papertigercomix.com. The War book and CD are now only £5.29 (cover price: £11.99) and really is superb value for the money. The 100-page Paper Tiger Comix #4 (plus all the extras) is now only £3.09 (originally £6.99) and is a really good selection of underground & alternative comix, surreal illustrations and brilliant eclectic underground music. You can also get all the issues of the great newspaper-sized UK comic anthology 'The Comix Reader' for only £1 each, or all 4 issues for £3.79. If you're unsure about buying, you can read reviews of the comics, listen to sound-clips from the CDs, and see sample pages. There's also a contact email on the site (www.papertigercomix.com). You can also find me on Facebook as Sean Paper-Tiger Comix, and there's a great Paper Tiger Comix group, which encourages all kind of weird, wonderful, and funny art, animation, etc. Thanks.

Interview with Sean Duffield, November 2012 by Darren Worrow.
www.darrenworrow.webs.com



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YOUR AD HERE!

SNEAK PEEK!

The fragile peace hangs in the balance in a World shaped by conflict and strife. The Guild Federation Syndicate has been made aware of the recent disruption caused by Reder Gy'lex; the Syndicate has requested for Iba'Dolith to end this upstart once and for all.

The Realmscape Wars

BY ALEX DRAGOJLOVIC

IT IS SAID THAT THE CROWN OF SEVEN KINGDOMS HAD AT ONE TIME UNIFIED THE NATIONS OF UTH'ARIUS, HOWEVER AFTER THE WAR OF THREE WORLDS AND THE END OF THE SECOND AGE THE CROWN WAS LOST AND ITS KINGDOMS LEFT IN RUIN. NOW IN THE THIRD AGE, A PROPHECY IS SPOKEN THROUGH WHISPERED LIPS OF A BOY WHO WOULD BE KING AND THROUGH HIS RULE UNITE THE BANNERS AND BRING PEACE BACK TO THE LANDS. BUT THEN AGAIN PROPHECIES ARE JUST THOUGHTS OF ONE POSSIBLE OUTCOME.

COMING SOON EXCLUSIVELY TO CLOUD 9 COMIX ON IOS, ANDROID AND KINDLE FIRE

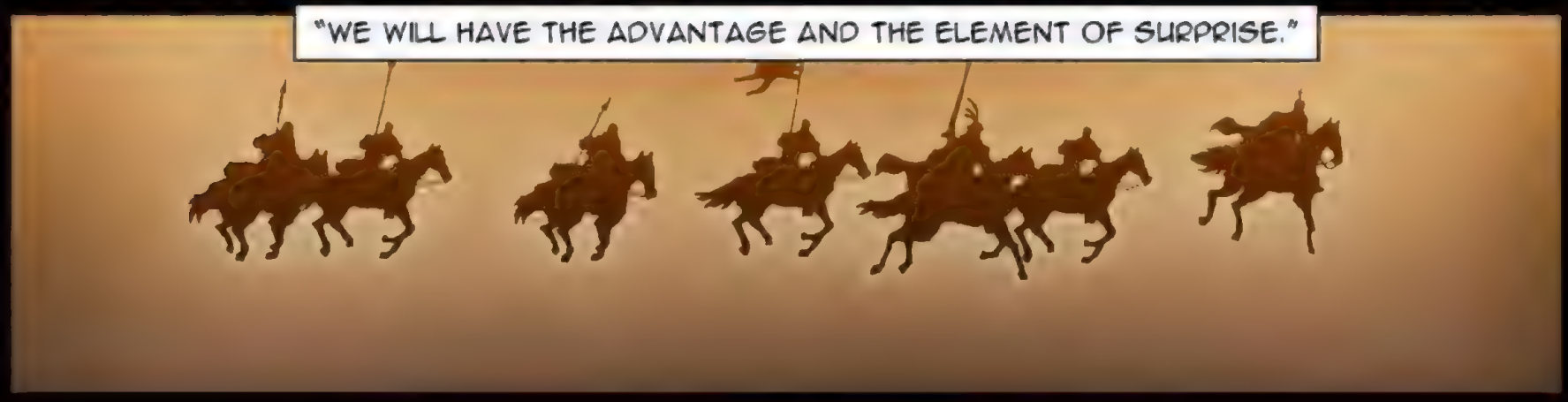
WELCOME, MEN OF IBA DOLITH. MAY WE HAVE THE PLEASURE OF KNOWING WHO LEADS YOU?
TELL YOUR LORDS THAT SIR MARCUS GILLIAM AND HIS PARTY HAVE ARRIVED. WE HAVE BEEN ON THE ROAD FOR OVER TWO MONTHS NOW; WE ALL COULD USE A ROOF OVER OUR HEADS AND A WARM BED TONIGHT!
ENTER, FRIENDS! ENTER!

SNEAK PEEK!

MY APOLOGIES SIR MARCUS THE GUILD FEDERATION IS HERE... THEY ARRIVED EARLY THIS MORNING

GREETINGS, SIR MARCUS. REDER GY'LEX HAS BEEN SIGHTED IN THE LOWER VALLEYS LESS THAN A DAY'S TRAVEL.
HE SHALL BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE AND HANG FOR HIS CRIMES AGAINST THE FREE PEOPLE OF THESE LANDS, KING FELDERAK.
COMING SOON EXCLUSIVELY TO CLOUD 9 COMIX ON IOS, ANDROID AND KINDLE FIRE

IS THERE NO OTHER COURSE OF ACTION BESIDES WAR...
FOR TEN YEARS NOW HAVE I KNOWN PEACE WITHIN MY KINGDOM; I WILL NOT RISK OPEN WARFARE NOT IF THERE WERE OTHER ALTERNATIVES...
WE'LL DRAW HIM OUT... BRING THE FIGHT TO GY'LEX AND AWAY FROM YOUR BORDERS...


"WE WILL HAVE THE ADVANTAGE AND THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE."

SNEAK PEEK!

12 years ago, I rode with Sir Marcus Giliam to squash the marauding army of the Nine Banses led by their their leader, Reder Gy'Lex.
TO ME SONS OF IBA-DOLITH, FOR OUR KING FELDERAK LET US END THIS INVASION ONCE AND FOR ALL... CHARGE!
WATCH OVER MARCUS, TEMPELTON. THIS BRINGS BACK MEMORIES OF MY FIRST BATTLE. I PISSED MYSELF AND FELL OFF MY HORSE!
MARCUS GILIAM IS MINE... ROUT THEM!

COMING SOON EXCLUSIVELY TO CLOUD 9 COMIX ON IOS, ANDROID AND KINDLE FIRE

SNEAK PEEK!

SIR GILLIAM, LOOK OL

CHOK

IT'S TOO LATE FOR ME NOW... REMEMBER... ALWAYS UPHOLD THE CODE AND DEFEND THE INNOCENT EVEN IF IT LEADS TO YOUR DEATH!

COMING SOON EXCLUSIVELY TO CLOUD 9 COMIX ON IOS, ANDROID AND KINDLE FIRE

SNEAK PEEK!

LET US SEE IF YOU ARE A BETTER SWORDSMAN THAN YOUR LATE MASTER...HAVE AT ME BOY!

SHWOOO

SHUAAK

That battle was when I earned the title: "Knight of the Realm".

COMING SOON EXCLUSIVELY TO CLOUD 9 COMIX ON IOS, ANDROID AND KINDLE FIRE

INTRODUCING: THE D.E.C*

*DIGITAL EXPERIENCE COMIC

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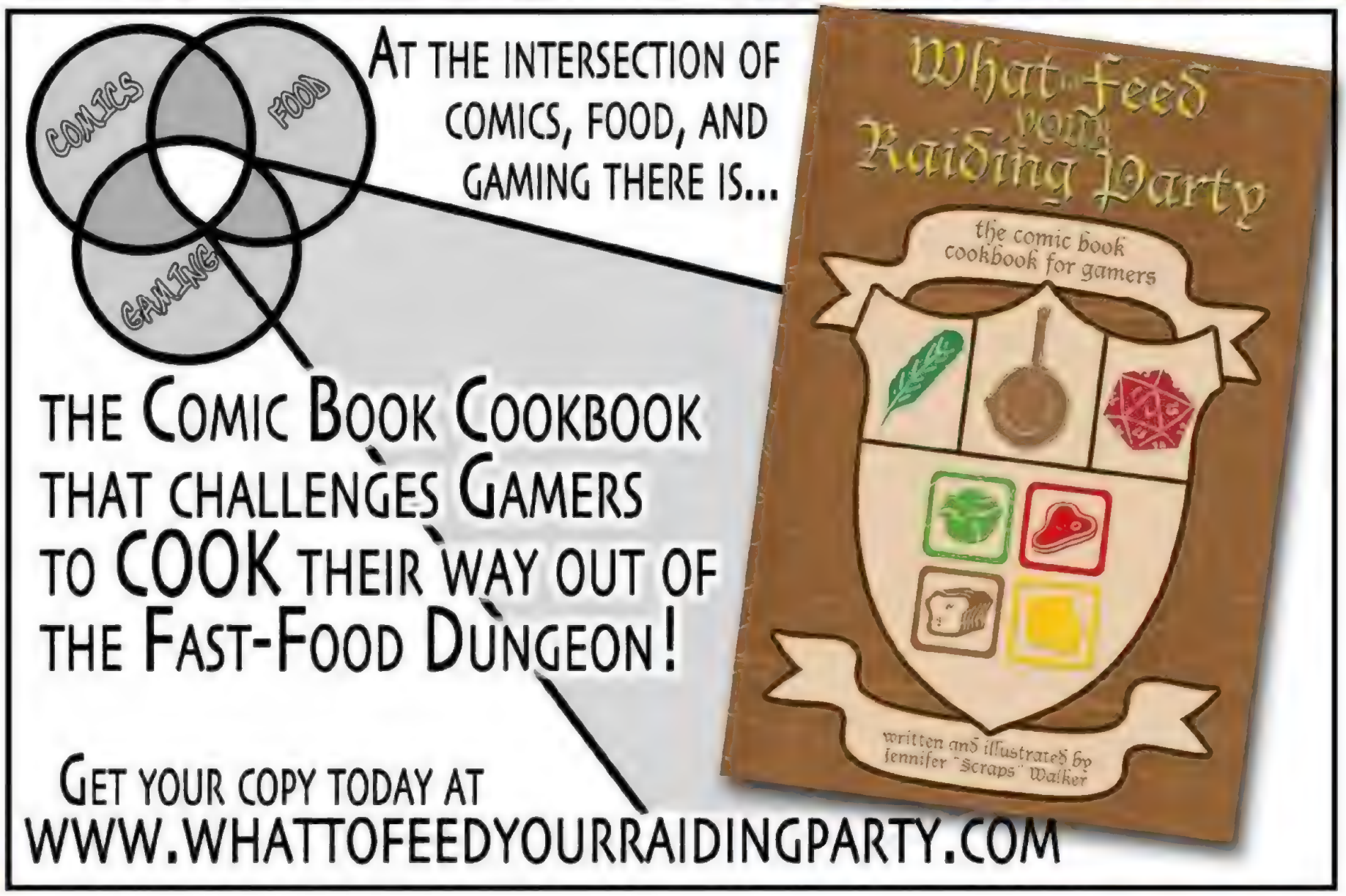
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RANDY VALIENTE

Interviewed by Jim Webb

Randy Valiente's work ranges from comics to storyboards to children's books. He was gracious enough to sit down and talk with SP! about his work and goals.

SP!: Would you please tell us a bit about yourself and your background. How did you first start drawing?

RV: I am Randy Valiente, a freelance artist from Manila, Philippines. I've been working in the Philippine comics industry since the early 90s. I was very young then; only 14 years old and one of the youngest in the biz, actually. Then I started getting jobs abroad in the early 2000s through the internet. Now I also do storyboard and concept design for animation, films, and gaming once in a while.

SP!: What drew you to art?

RV: I was born in a family of artists. We are more into music; I have relatives that are actually professional musicians, but we also have in the family who're into visual art. One of my uncles, my mother's brother, is a painter. So, I guess that made me an artist too; seeing my uncle at an early age doing artwork inside my grandfather's house was a big inspiration. As I grew up, I developed my creativity by imagining things and making up fantastic stories of cowboys and robots and wrote them at the back of my notebook in school. I already knew at that time that I would become an artist someday.

SP!: What drew you to comics?

RV: In the Philippines, in the 70s and 80s during the martial law years of the Marcoses, komiks (as we call them) were national. Hundreds of titles were being published every week. We even had two the same title that went out every week—Monday and Wednesday—with the same artists and writers. We were arguably even bigger than the Japanese manga industry during that time.

Komiks sold for only a cent and we could also rent them for a much lower price. It was crazy; komiks were everywhere. There was no place in the Philippines without a komiks store.

I grew up reading komiks. Unfortunately, when I entered the industry in the early 90s, it was the time when the komiks industry was waning, because of economic instability. More houses had TV, there were video games and movies, all of which affected the publishing industry.

SP!: Who are your influences?

RV: I grew up reading Tagalog komiks,

so I was more into local creators. I am not familiar with American comics published during that time, actually. I hadn't read one when I was a child. Of course, I saw Superman, Batman, and Spider-Man on Saturday TV cartoons, but that was it. I hadn't read their comics.

Hal Santiago (who became my mentor when I entered the komiks biz) and Vincent Kua Jr. were my personal favorites. It was later that I discovered other Filipino greats, such as Francisco Coching, Nestor Redondo, Alfredo Alcala and Alex Niño. My mentor also introduced me to Hal Foster and Alex Raymond, so I'm more of a classically-schooled comics guy

SP!: How much professional work have you done and for what companies?

RV: Because I started in the local biz and have already drawn hundreds of komiks, I will just list some of my gigs abroad. I'd already done dozens of independent and small publications when I started in the early 2000s. But I guess 'Headlocked' (written by Michael Kingston and published by Visionary Comics) made an impact during my starting years. Then I did three books for Zenescope's 'Grimm Fairy Tales' series. Just recently, I also did three books of 'Army of Darkness' for Dynamite Entertainment. I am also doing covers for them now.

SP!: What artists influenced you the most?

RV: Right now, there's no one in particular. I have hundreds of idols and influences from comics to fine arts, illustrators to painters. But a lot of my comics friends told me that my drawing is more in the 'classic' style. I don't know, maybe.

SP!: What's the art field like in your country?

RV: Filipinos, in general, are very creative. We are recognized as singers or boxers in the world's view. A lot of Filipinos work in the big industries of animation, design, comics, etc. Unfortunately, we don't have great opportunity in our country, so a lot of my countrymen look outside, especially in the arts. Just recently, one of our painters was hailed as the biggest seller for Southeast Asian artists in an auction in Hong Kong. His painting was sold for a million dollars. Heck, if he just stuck to the local art scene, that piece would not even make one-fourth of that.

In comics, a lot of local artists were targeting Marvel or DC. Of course, there's the prestige and money. Meanwhile, it's still being debated whether our local komiks industry still exists, or whether it is already dead.

SP!: What do you think of the state of the art field in general?

RV: The world is changing into a visual world. Everything we see now is a product of creativity—from entertainment to business to sports, everything is visual. Good times for creatives and artists.

SP!: Do you think the connection between comics and movies is beneficial?

RV: In some ways, yes. Comics help

(Continued on page 24)

promote movies, movies help promote comics. It's a win-win situation. But there are hardcore comics fans that are irritated with movie versions and expect something they are familiar with. Remember Iron Man 3's 'Mandarin'? That was shit, man. :)

SP!: What's your favorite medium: pen, brush, painting digital color...?

RV: I use all of those, depending on the project. But, right now, since I've received a lot of pencil jobs, I have no choice but to use pencils. I am now painting on the side, using watercolor, actually—for commissions and future exhibition.

SP!: Last but not least, describe your working process. How do you go from a blank page to your latest masterpiece?

RV: I don't do thumbnail sketches. I work directly on the actual paper. I use blue pencil for rough layouts. Then I work on details with pencils. If I am going to ink my own pencils, I sometimes skip the (black) pencil process and just do the details with blue. It's easy to clean those blue lines in Photoshop, anyway.

SP!: Thanks Randy!

You can check out Randy's work at www.randyvaliente.carbonmade.com

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Jim Webb is a comic book and storyboard illustrator. He's worked on the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle and Venture Brothers animated series and comic book publishers, such as Moonstone, Graphic Classics and Asylum Press. Currently, he's working on his own series entitled the ADVERSARY, available on Comixology.

The Incredible World of Devon Devereaux

By Ellen Fleischer

Devon Devereaux has a client list that includes Disney, Slave Labor Graphics, Portland Mercury, Willamette Week, Bee Int., Graphic Classics, Laughing Squid, and the HP Lovecraft Film Festival. He has shown in galleries all over the world, including Los Angeles and Osaka, Japan. He is the artist for The Littlest Bitch, a "not-for-children children's book" written by David Quinn, and published by Sellers Books. This year, Devon is releasing Tales of Hot Rod Horror Volume 2 with a variety of talented creators. Devon is also completing Josh Lobster & The Mystery of Aqua Park with Chris Reilly, and the webcomic Triptych with Adam Gallardo.

Devon was gracious enough to take some time out of his busy schedule and talk with SP! Magazine about his career, his future plans, and his experience with self-publishing. And Adam Gallardo was happy to share some additional information about Triptych with us.

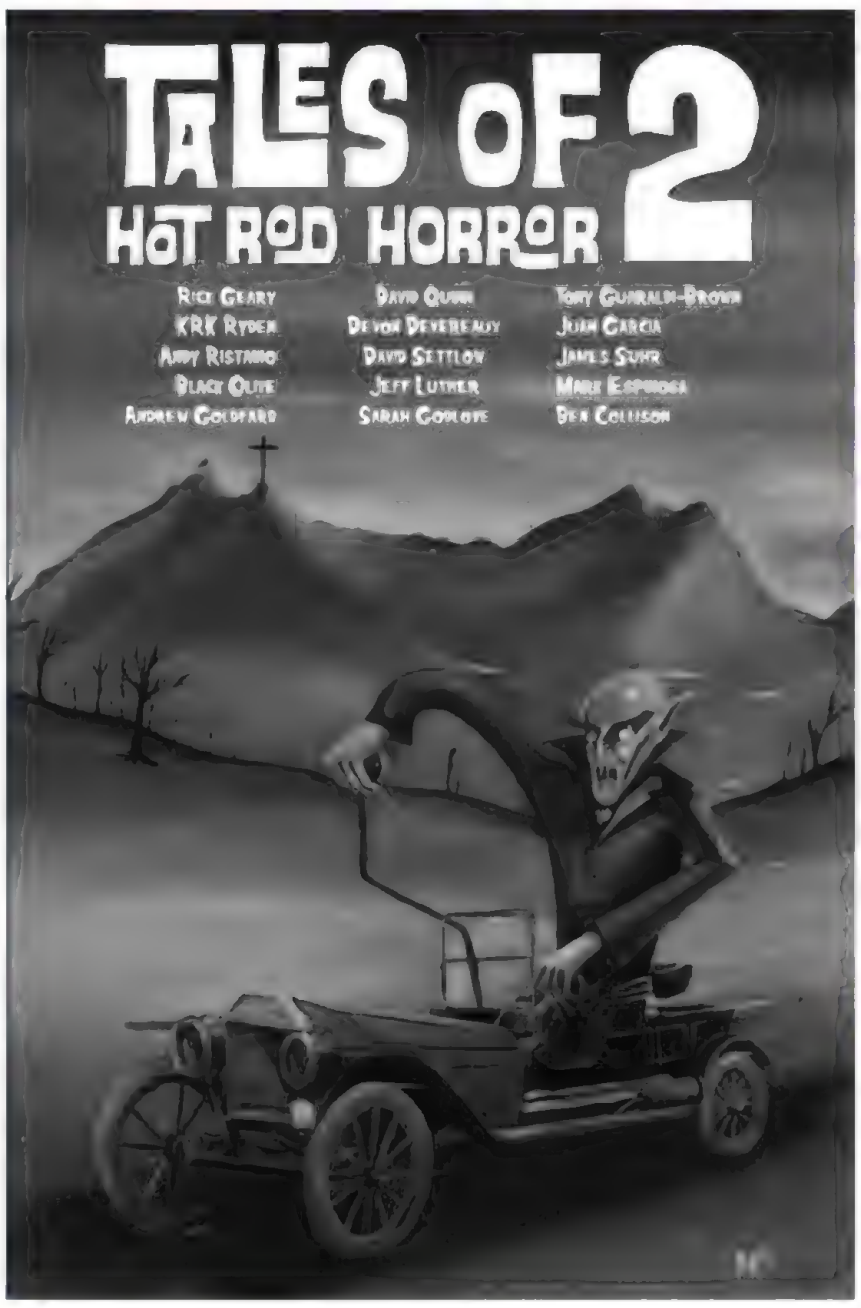
SP!: How long have you been drawing?

DD: I didn't really seriously start drawing until I was 16 or 17. I thought I wanted to be a film maker or a writer. After I discovered cartoonists like Keith Giffen, who were writing and drawing their own books, I realized I was better at drawing and painting than writing.

SP!: Tell us a bit about your background. Have you always planned on being an artist?

DD: I always wanted to create. I used to work in my neighbor's garage making wooden toys, when I was really young. I idolized Benjamin Franklin and loved how he created his own opportunities for the things he made and discovered. That evolved into making movies on Super 8, and then later, video and scripting and drawing my own books. I got my first illustration gig working at a t-shirt shop when I was 16.

SP!: Who or what would you consider to have had the greatest influence(s) on your work? (I.E. fellow artists, particular works of art, life experience, sage advice...)



DD: Wow. Here goes: Marc Davis (Disney's Haunted Mansion), Stephen Gammell (Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark), Charles Addams, Rick Geary, Edward Gorey, Tim Burton, Rod Serling, Walt Disney, Hieronymous Bosch, Salvador Dali, Mark Ryden, Glenn Barr, Roger Corman — to name a few. I recently read the War of Art by Stephen Pressfield. It's all about letting go of the romantic idea of art and inspiration and working things out when you aren't feeling it. That has been very helpful.

SP!: From where do you draw your greatest source(s) of inspiration and creativity?

DD: For as long as I can remember, I was compelled to create and tell stories in one medium or another. My mom was a great storyteller and really nurtured that part of me early on. She introduced me to Twilight Zone, monster movies, fairy tales, etc.

SP!: You boast an impressive list of clients, from Disney to Portland Mercury to the HP Lovecraft Film Festival. Was there something special that you did that you think got you on their radar, or would you say that it was more a question of shopping your portfolio around and gradually building a brand?

DD: Honestly, it's a matter of having thick skin and being able to separate your ego from your work. All of these folks said no or ignored my inquiries — until they said, "Yes, here do this and leave me alone for a while." Haha. It can be as difficult getting gigs now as it was 15 years ago.

SP!: How did you come to show your work in places like LA and Osaka?

DD: I do a lot of pop culture shows like San Diego Comic Con and Seattle Crypticon. Part of your job is just showing up with your best product and letting people come to you. Most of my gallery work comes from this process. I think if you have a strong presence at these shows, it lets people know you aren't afraid to sell yourself or invest in your own product and you will bring that attitude to the gallery. This is true in publishing, as well. Sometimes, it doesn't matter how great your book is. They want to see what your network and your marketing plan are. It really is all about who you know.

SP!: Let's talk a bit about Triptych. How did you and Adam Gallardo meet up? Is

(Continued on page 26)

Triptych the first time you've worked together as a team?

DD: I have been incredibly lucky to work with some fantastic writers. Like a lot of creators, it can be difficult to pay all your bills solely from working in comics. Adam and I were working at a print shop together about ten years ago, and had always talked about doing something together. We first collaborated on Tales of Hot Rod Horror. I hired him to write a story that my friend Justin Nitz illustrated about a monstrous bait car.

SP!: Where did the idea for the webcomic come from?

DD: It came out of determining what made the most sense for continuing to make comics in this age, where we have the opportunity to get the story out to a world-wide audience. We can tell the story we want and build our own audience at a steady pace. That way, when we go to print, we will already have a base that is familiar with what we are doing. If we go with courting a publisher, they can see what we've been building. If we do it ourselves, we have a fanbase when we hit Kickstarter.

SP!: Who are the characters in the strip? What drives them?

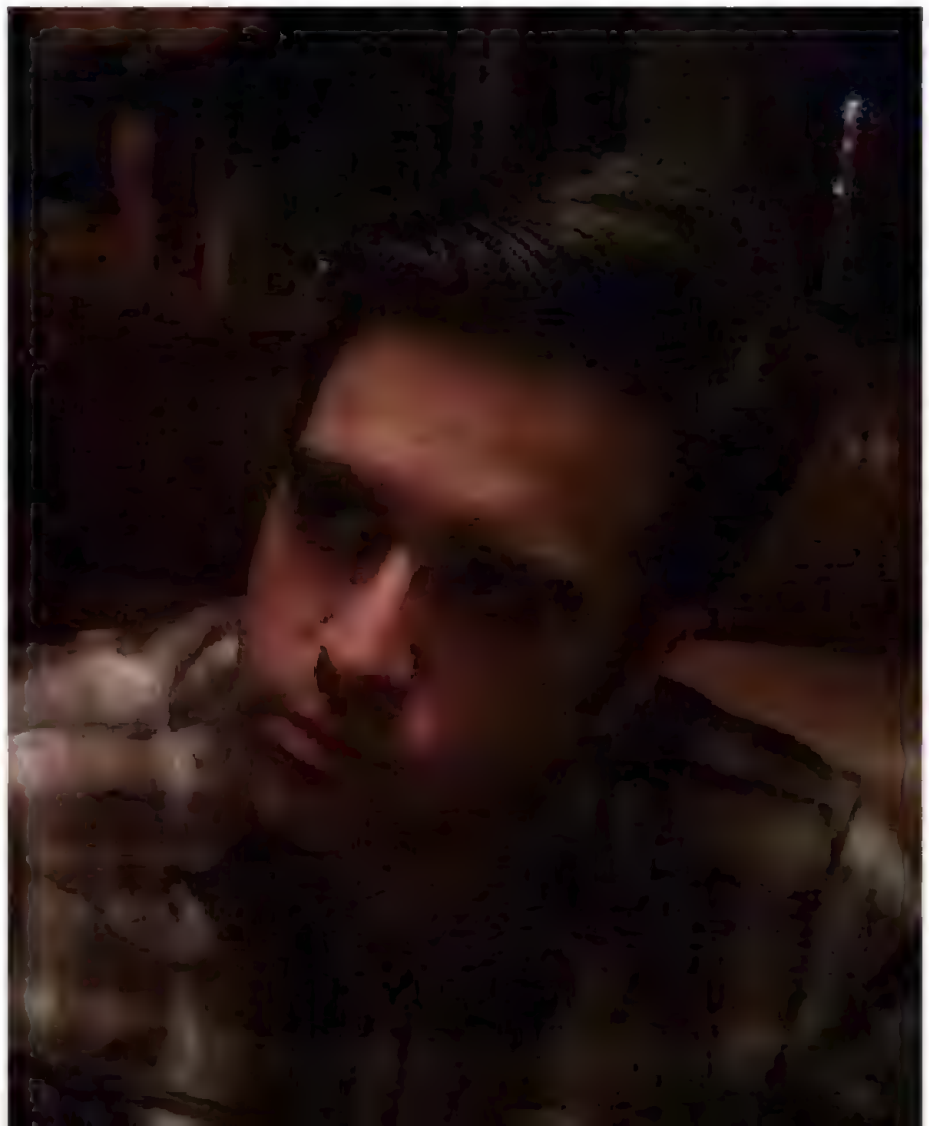
DD: Uhh. Let me ask Adam.

AG: Triptych is a coming of age story of teen angst and the occult. The main characters are a trio of teenagers. All of them are misfits.

David wants to leave his outsider status behind, and he sees sports as a means to that end — which is why he's joined the school's basketball team.

Laura is David's girlfriend, and that's probably how she defines herself, "David's girlfriend." To a certain extent, she wants what he wants, but as the story progresses, she begin to realize that that's not enough for her.

Terry is sixteen years old and he also wants out of his current situation — though he's too belligerent to go the route that David has chosen and conform. His friends are growing beyond him, his family and school are failing him, and he's beginning to realize that he's losing control of his life – if he ever had control of it in the first place. He wants to define himself and still set himself apart from a society he sneers at. Full of the self-assurance and bitterness that only a teenager can bring to bear, Terry looks around him, at the culture in which he's immersed, at the friends he's supposed to emulate, and he decides that only one thing can change his life for the better – magic. I think if he had any talents, or any social skills, he'd probably start a punk band, but he since he doesn't, he begins to use magic — which seems like a natural outgrowth from his interest in fantasy literature and role playing games. But the path of the magician is never an easy one. Terry may kill himself trying to save his life.



SP!: What happens during your collaborative process? It's a bit of a chicken-or-egg question, but is it the storyline that tends to drive the art, or does the art drive the story?

DD: This one is definitely a story driven process. Every writer I work with is a different relationship. Adam is writing the story panel by panel and I draw exactly what he writes. I'm working in a much more realistic style than ever before and it's been really challenging, but rewarding when I can pull it off.

SP!: Let's talk a bit about The Littlest Bitch. How did you come to collaborate with David Quinn?

DD: I first met David at a signing in Flint, MI, when I was 13. Years later, I started making my own comics. We were sitting next to each other at a convention in Detroit and he asked whether I was interested in making a twisted children's book with him. And, of course, I said yes. David also wrote The Ballad of the Eyeball Dragster and Crying at the Haunted Car Wash for the Hot Rod Books that I illustrated.

SP!: The book is billed as a "not-for-children children's book." How would you define that?

DD: It's basically a twisted children's book for adults. David and I have a few more ideas to continue this line, but we both have to finish some other

(Continued on page 27)

projects first.

SP!: Any favorite/fun illustrations to draw in that work?
DD: The cover was a lot of fun. I always have a blast working with David. Our sensibilities and senses of humor seem to match. There was a big gorilla that was fun to draw.

SP!: Looking at the pitch for Tales of Hot Rod Horror #2 on Kickstarter, I'm getting a distinct Twilight Zone vibe. Was that intentional?
DD: Oh yes. Everything I do is filthy with Twilight Zone. I was imprinted pretty early on. A lot of my paintings are in black and white. I love the rich look of the 60s film. I did a pretty bad impersonation of Rod Serling in the Kickstarter video. Thank God the content was strong enough for people to look past it.

SP! How do you go about soliciting talent to participate in the series?
DD: I have been doing this for a long time and most of the folks are friends of mine — except a few folks that submitted work to me.

SP!: What stories are you presenting in this volume? Can you give a short synopsis of a few (or all!)?
DD: Sure. Here goes!

"Crying at the Haunted Car Wash," written by David Quinn, illustrated by Devon Devereaux. It's a sinister ride to hot rod hell via a haunted car wash where the ghost of an infamous crooner is the gatekeeper.

"Cemetery Road," written and illustrated by Rick Geary. A classic urban legend about the ghost of a fateful car crash victim that plays out year after year.

"The Tale of the Headless Hot Rodder," written and illustrated by Juan Garcia. A beautiful demon offers Tommy a second chance at life after a horrible car crash, but at a terrible cost.

"The Weird-Wheeled Race to Ruin," written and illustrated by Andrew Goldfarb. Ogner Stump and Slub Glub enter a weird and wacky race with a cast of esoteric and eccentric archetypes. Will they be rewarded or punished for crossing the finish line?

"Tunnel," written and illustrated by Andy Ristaino. As nightmare inside of nightmare unravels, we try to uncover the secret of this ominous tunnel.

"Headlights," written by Tomie McCay, illustrated by Black Olive. A woman stops to check out what looks like an abandoned car, only to find out it is bait laid down by a nasty predator.

"The Brides of Hell," written by Devon Devereaux, illustrated by David Settlow. A coven of witches pledges their souls to the Beast for long life and eternal beauty. Fast forward to 1969, when payment is collected.

"The Haunted Hearse," written and illustrated by KRK Ryden. The Haunted Hearse collects travelers from the 1950s beatnik era to the 60s surfer and hippie generations and beyond.

"Death Jump," written by Jeff Luther and Sarah Godlove, illustrated by Tony Guaraldi-Brown. A time traveling Bonnie and Clyde make the jump — not to a different time, but a different realm.

"The Strange Case of Hyde and Go Seek," written and illustrated by James Suhr. The good doctor uses his mind and body altering serum on himself and his motorcycle!

SP! Did you always intend to self-publish this series, or did you consider shopping it around to various houses? What prompted your decision?
DD: No! I only publish out of necessity. I would much rather spend my time working on something new than taking the time to continually push these books. We courted many publishers on the Hot Rod Books, but there were no takers. In the end, we did it ourselves. But on both books, we usually end up outselling most of the competing anthologies. With Kickstarter, you can now make more money than you would if you went with a mid-level publisher. For the third volume, we might not even waste time — just go straight to crowd-sourcing.

SP!: Was Tales of Hot Rod Horror your first venture into self-publishing?
DD: I have been self-publishing for years. The books got a little better each time. These were 8.5"x 11" folded-and-stapled books we used to call ashcans. Tales of Hot Rod Horror Volume 1 was the first time I bought an ISBN, solicited through larger distributors, and bought advertising (grown-up publishing. Haha!).

SP!: Is there any advice you wish that someone had given you (or that you wish you had listened to!) about self publishing when you started out?
DD: I don't know. When I look at my earlier work, I'm glad it didn't get more exposure. I think when we put out Tales of Hot Rod Horror Volume 1, we went through the right channels. Also, so much has changed. Back then, there were no webcomics, no Kickstarters, no iPads or

(Continued on page 28)

Kindles. Things change so fast in publishing; these days. I'm still looking for advice to do it better.

SP!: How did you find the Kickstarter experience? Is this something that you would recommend? Are there any words of advice/caution that you have for other creators?

I LOVE KICKSTARTER! Yes. It really is a game changer for people like me. I would say, start building your email lists, do as many shows as you can, and send out press releases. Try to finish most of your product before you launch. Also, celebrate your product. No one likes to see a sad story on Kickstarter. That seems to be the biggest pitfall. The rewards structure is a big part of it too.

SP!: What is Josh Lobster & The Mystery of Aqua Park?

DD: This is a book that writer Chris Reilly and I are creating. This is the book I would write if I had more time and know how. Luckily, Chris wrote it and all I have to do is make the pictures. It's a great story about a circus side show that comes to this tiny island. All hell breaks loose and the island is shut off from the rest of civilization. It's up to Josh, who has a gigantic lobster claw for an arm, to find out what the shady Barnacle Bill is up to.

SP!: What do you when you aren't drawing?

DD: Regular life stuff, movies, dancing, barbecues, going to the beach. I do a weekly podcast called The Cackling Imp Podcast, where I interview other creators. That has been a lot of fun. My wife and I travel a lot and do shows all over North America.

SP!: What else is on your horizon?

DD: I am preparing for a solo show at the end of the month at The Peculiarium, a museum of the weird in Portland, OR. I'm working on some new commissions, doing editorial illustration, and just trying to balance everything. Also, I'm working on a spooky board game. I am very excited about this.

SP!: Is there anything else that you'd like to add that we haven't touched on, yet?

DD: I think this covers everything. Thanks!

SP!: Finally, how can our readers keep up to date on you and your work?

DD: You can go to these sites:
http://www.devondevereaux.com
(illustration)
http://www.triptychcomic.com
(web comic)
http://www.cacklingimppress.com
(publishing)
http://cacklingimp.podbean.com
(podcast)

SP!: Thanks so much for taking the time to talk with us today!

DD: Thank you!

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An Interview with Mike Garley

Conducted by Mark Turner

Mike Garley is a writer whose skills have breathed life into comics, games and screenplays. His talents have been used in the service of the award-winning production company beActive Media, with comic and book publisher Titan Publishing, and for game developers Wickedy Splits and Masters of Pie. The duties of Editor-in-Chief of VS Comics and The Dead Roots comic anthology fill out his impressive CV. Simply put, Mike Garley is an "A" grade talent. He recently took time out of a busy schedule to share a bit about his most recent work, Eponymous, the indie comics scene in the UK, his career, and more.

SP!: What is Eponymous about?

Will it be an ongoing story or do you envision an eventual ending?

MG: Eponymous is a thriller espionage story set after the age of Superheroes. All the superheroes are long since dead or forgotten, allowing the world to return to its preconceived idea of normality. But when a massacre on a global scale is predicted at the hands of Casey—the first superpowered-individual the world has seen for nearly twenty years—the decision is taken to find her and to kill her, before it's too late. Dragged into a deadly game of cat and mouse, Casey must fight to unravel the mysteries of her past, fight to avoid her predicted role in the nightmarish version of the future—and fight just to stay alive.

The comic itself is an ongoing story, which we're currently telling in ten-page segments. We've got an end planned to the current storyline, but we're a few years away from that and due to the publishing model, we've got enough room to take the odd detour or two.

SP!: Where did Eponymous come from? It seems to be very much influenced by today's political climate and bristles with tension; did current events contribute to its creation?

MG: Lots of things influenced Eponymous. At a base level, it's what would happen to a superhero story if you took away the superheroes. The political elements are a result of bringing Eponymous into the real world, where, if there were someone of great power, then they would obviously be in the political spotlight.

SP!: The title boasts art and lettering that are very tight and clean. How did you decide to work with both Martin Simmonds and Michael Stock?

MG: I'd worked with Martin Simmonds a couple of times before; firstly, in an editorial role for Dead Roots—where his artwork and attitude towards comics was a breath of fresh air—and secondly, we worked together in the traditional artist-writer capacity on Scarlet Falls, which is a reimagining of Little Red Riding Hood. We had a great time on both projects and were keen to work together again. Eponymous gave us that opportunity. His art style influenced the writing style of Eponymous. It's cinematic and gritty, with lots of big panels allowing him to do what he does best.

And I've worked with Mike Stock countless times before; we're old school friends ('school' as in the place you go to learn, not like the 'street' term), and it was actually me who suggested he tried his hand at lettering. He's got a design background and is incredibly talented, with the attention to detail you need to be a great letterer. I was delighted that he could work on Eponymous, as his lettering is pitch-perfect on Martin's artwork.

(Continued on page 30)

SP!: Let's talk a little bit about the state of comics. What is the attitude/reception toward the art form of graphic storytelling in the UK? Does this make reaching your audience easier/more difficult?

MG: The UK comic scene is in good shape. There are loads of great creators coming through at the moment, but there's still an issue with reaching a readership. Without a publisher, the most effective way is to do the con circuit, but you're still fairly limited, as the UK cons are fairly small (in comparison to US cons) and attract a lot of the same people. On top of that, travelling around the country isn't cheap.

SP!: How did you get into sequential storytelling? Any favorite genres?

MG: I've always loved storytelling and was obsessed with comics and films as a kid. I was working as a restaurant manager and had given up on the idea of finding my 'true calling,' so I decided that I'd do a creative writing course so I could learn the nuts and bolts of writing, and then write my own comics, just for fun. Luckily for me, one of my scripts ended up in the hands of a university tutor who offered me a place on his writing MA. That then led to my first job writing comics. Basicall,y I got lucky.

SP!: In a market saturated with zombie-themed comics, what made you decide to do Dead Roots? What sets it apart from other genre efforts?

MG: Zombies are awesome. I love zombies, but Dead Roots doesn't focus on the zombies, it focuses on the emotional state and experiences of everyday people and their journeys, as they search to find their loved ones in the initial outbreak of a zombie attack! When looking at submissions, I was very conscientious to avoid any obvious or clichéd zombie stories and I am really happy with what all the Dead Roots creators have produced.

SP!: You also pull double duty on Dead Roots and with VS Comics, as both a writer and editor. What are some of the challenges that you face serving in this capacity? Do you enjoy one over the other?

MG: Editing is great, as I get to see—and hopefully help in—the inception of other peoples' stories, as well as getting the opportunity to learn from those I work with.

But I definitely see myself as a writer first. Nothing beats creating and developing your own stories.

SP!: VS Comics launched last year and rolled out at Thought Bubble as a digital-format comic. What factors went into deciding to go digital? What are you feelings on digital versus print?

MG: I love both, but we went digital as it's the easier and cheaper option, meaning we could concentrate on telling great stories, without the worry of distribution and publishing.

Personally, I like to read digital comics, but own the collected editions of comics that I love. I think the private, tactile interaction that you have when reading a book can never totally be replaced with a digital comic and I think there's plenty of room for both to coexist.

We actually have plans for print copies of Eponymous and Dead Roots and I'm hoping that these will both be in deluxe hardcover. If they are it'll be due to the readership that digital comics have allowed us to create.

SP!: As a writer, who would you say some of your influences were/are?

MG: That's a hard one. Lots of people influence me, probably too many to mention.

SP!: What is up next for Mike Garley?

MG: I've got a lot to do for the collected editions of Dead Roots and Eponymous, as well as helping to maintain VS Comics and a few secret projects, which I'm not really allowed to talk about, but I can tell you that they're awesome. They're awesome…

SP!: Thank you Mike! Fans can find more on his work at Dead Roots and VS Comics (which Eponymous features in) at:

http://www.deadroots.co.uk/

http://www.vscomics.co.uk/

Eponymous

By: Mike Garley, Martin Simmonds, and Mike Stock

Get a copy at:

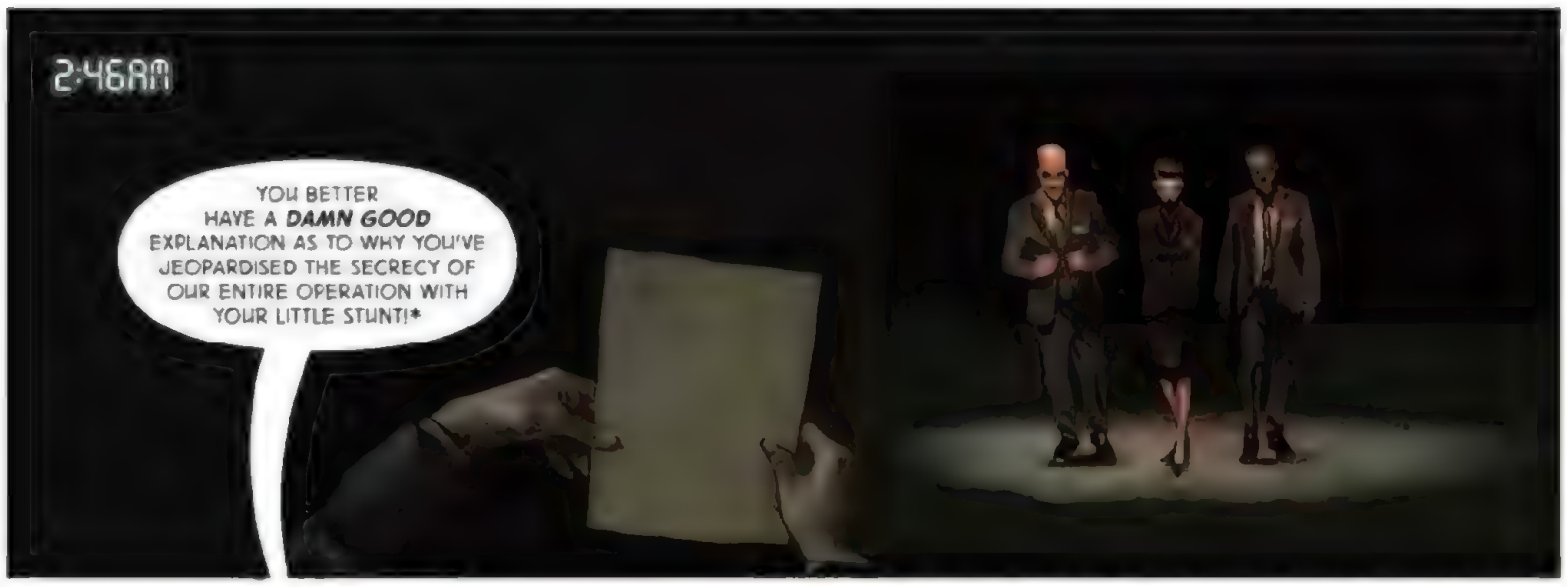
http://www.vscomics.co.uk/

Eponymous

By: Mike Garley, Martin Simmonds, and Mike Stock

Get a copy at:

http://www.vscomics.co.uk/


2:46AM
YOU BETTER HAVE A DAMN GOOD EXPLANATION AS TO WHY YOU'VE JEOPARDISED THE SECRECY OF OUR ENTIRE OPERATION WITH YOUR LITTLE STUNT!*

*AS SEEN IN EPONYMOUS #2: LEAP OF FAITH - JUST TWO HOURS EARLIER.

LOCAL RESIDENTS WERE AWOKEN IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING BY WHAT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS 'A SERIES OF SMALL EXPLOSIONS'.
THE EXACT REASON FOR THESE 'EXPLOSIONS' IS STILL, AT THIS TIME, UNKNOWN.
8:04AM
EXPLOSION IN CITY CENTRE.

I'M STILL PRETTY CONFUSED ABOUT WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED LAST NIGHT AND I WAS THERE.
ANY CHANCE YOU COULD SHED SOME LIGHT ON WHAT HAPPENED, LUCY? OR EVEN BETTER STILL, WHY EXACTLY IT HAPPENED?
7:35AM

Eponymous

By: Mike Garley, Martin Simmonds, and Mike Stock

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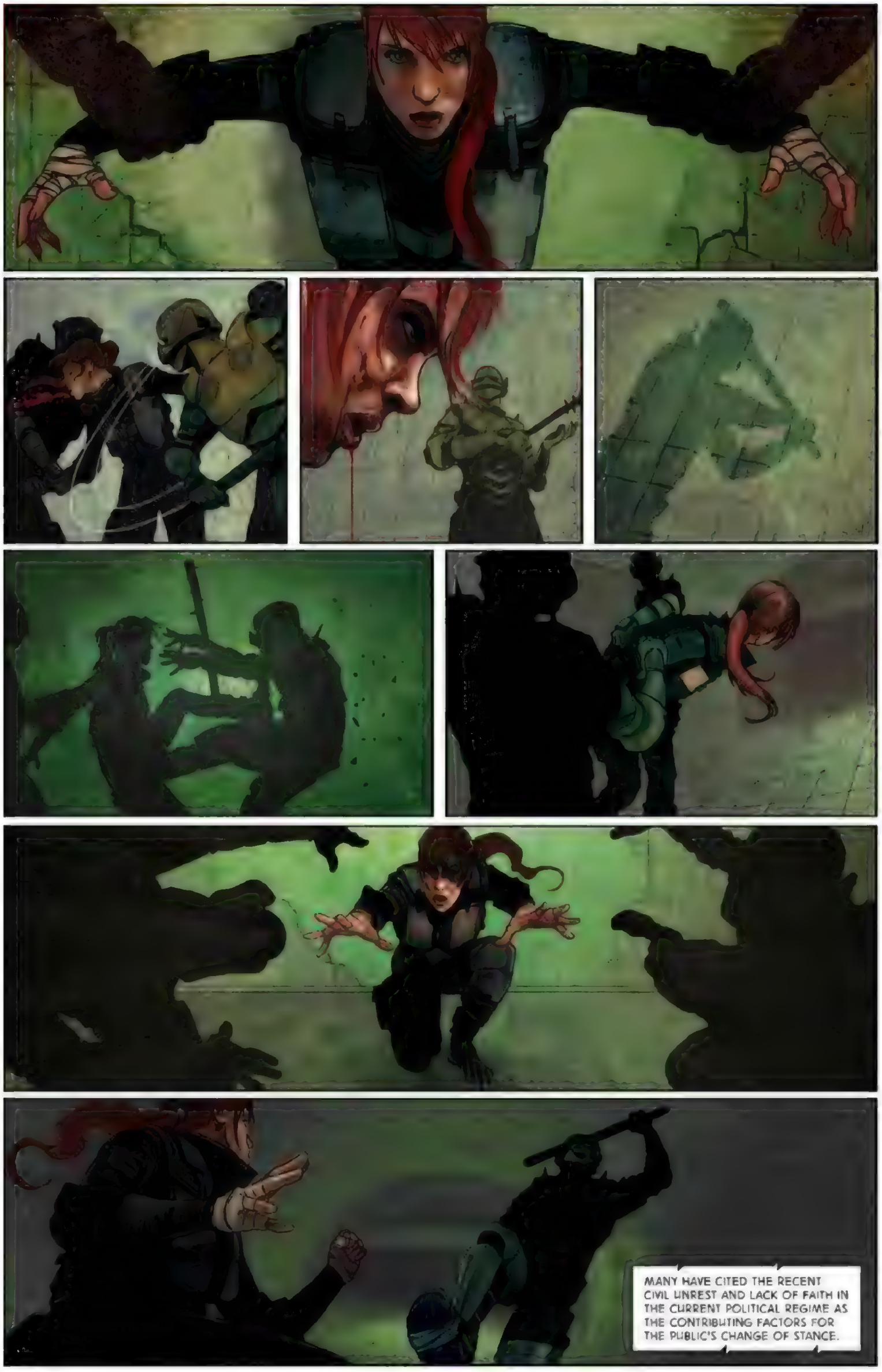
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20 Questions with LoveGrapes

Article by John Wilson

Some bands put on an act, a persona that they "wear" on stage and hang up when the show is over. They do the job but you never get to see anything "real" from them. And then, there are bands like LoveGrapes, who give their complete selves with every show and with every song. Their passion is overwhelming and every song is drenched in the sweat of their hard work and the shear rawness of their music. I was thrilled to sit down with lead singer small-j jonny and ask him twenty questions.

SP!: What was your first experience with music?

sjj: Probably More of The Monkees when I was three, going on four. One of my mom's albums.

SP!: How did that experience influence you desire to play music professionally?

sjj: Watchin' reruns of The Monkees TV show as a kid probably planted the initial 'being-in-a-band' type seeds.

SP!: Is this your first band? If not, what is the musical history?

sjj: No, second. The first one was a short-lived endeavor back in '94. Four of those songs are still being used with LGs, though.

SP!: What is the origin story of your band?

sjj: Not long after the first band, I started doing club cover projects with various friends from time to time. Some people wanted to know when I would be fronting one of these evenings, so we gave the cover projects a name: LoveGrapes. When I started going an original song route again, many friends said I should keep the name. We started off with myself, a couple friends I'd done some cover stuff with, and a bassist another friend highly recommended. The original guitarist had to drop out after a while cause of kids and other priorities. By the time we found The Kid—the guitarist we now have—we'd also come across a drummer that everyone was more than pleased with, too.

SP!: How did you choose the name "LoveGrapes"?

sjj: Seemed like a good idea at the time??

SP!: The name has a comedic and slightly innuendo feel to it… any correlations there?

sjj: Nope.

SP!: What was it like to play together?

sjj: Safe. We knew we all had each other's backs, especially on stage, and all wanted the songs to be the best they could.

SP!: What do you think makes you unique as a band?

sjj: Well, a few things. The one that seems to raise an eyebrow or two among other bands and song-writers, though, is how our songs are put together. We start with a concept or idea that, to our knowledge, no one else has attempted. Or we take it to places others have not. Again, to the best of our knowledge. I then build up the lyrics first, based on that, and afterwards, we do the music. Pretty much the last concern is whether it's our style, or whether it's 'us' or not. As a result, we seem to have a lot of diversity with what we do. Basically, the subject matter and the process in building a song up from there seem to be the first two things that set us apart from other rock bands.

SP!: How would you describe your music to someone that has never heard it?

sjj: "Real," "honest," "raw," "intense." This is actually what we hear from others.

SP!: What is your process for creating new music?

sjj: That's pretty much been covered. I guess, one thing that can be added is that all songs start off with something that has happened in, or is a part of, the lives of people we know.

SP!: Do you currently have a piece that you would say is your best?

sjj: No. They all have their own history and have each taken on lives of their own, as well. As such, it's hard for us to decide which pieces may be better than the others. Also with our audiences. We never get two people agreeing on which is the best song in the set we just did. This also makes it tricky deciding which songs to record and release next.

SP!: What has been the best experience that you have had as a band? What made it so good?

sjj: I really don't like speaking for the others, but I believe I can safely say that it was the releasing of the song "Devil's Groove". Up to this point, we had no idea what others would think of the song outside of the friendship/fan base we have here in Helsinki. The reaction people have had to that one song alone has been more than we ever could have imagined taking shape, especially internationally.

SP!: What are the worst experiences that you have had as a band? What went wrong?

sjj: I can only speak for myself here, but one guy I worked with for awhile was

(Continued on page 36)

seriously holding us back in some ways and, sort of, crippling us live in other ways. Not that he wasn't good at what he did, by any means—we just couldn't connect for some reason. A priority for us has also been to be a decent live band and when his not connecting with the rest of us became obvious to those checking out our gigs as well, I just started getting depressed. I also don't believe in getting rid of someone (or 'kicking someone out') because there may be some differences between us and I tried to see if there was some way we could work things out. Finally, things got so tense and stressful that, after he was not able to make a few shows, I told him we really needed to have someone who could be more committed to what we were doing. Could he make that type of commitment? He said "no," and seemed to understand and accept that we would be looking for someone to take his place as a result. Neither of us was too happy about this at the time, but I'm grateful things finally ended on an understanding note and that we're still friends. After we parted ways, I also did what I could to help him get work with other bands and artists who, I thought, could use his help and touch and with whom he might be a good fit. In spite of all that happened, he really did grow in his craft and as a live performing artist during the time he was with us. I hated seeing all that go to waste.

SP!: You are not yet a "signed" band… Is this something that you aspire to or is it even on your radar?

sjj: No, it's something we're not interested in at the moment. We have a lot of seriously great, wonderful people helping us out and as such, being a "signed" band is not really needed. If we start branching out gig-wise, we may have to get someone to help keep that all together, but a label seems pretty pointless and useless in this day and age.

SP!: What are your plans for the future of the band?

sjj: We take things—more or less—a day at a time. Just working on getting more songs recorded and released at the moment, and developing some new ones, too.

SP!: Is there one image or symbol that you think best describes your band's arching idea?

sjj: None that comes to mind.

SP!: What have you done to promote your band?

sjj: Not that much ourselves. People letting others know about us seems to be our best source promotion lately. I guess, I've always believed that if we had something worthwhile, something people liked, connected with, and maybe even thought was special in some way, that word would get out. And that now seems to be happening.

SP!: Do you have any desire for your music to be used in other venues, like commercials, TV or movies?

sjj: There's a short independent film that's supposed to be out in the autumn, that will have a couple of our songs in it. Or one song and a part of another. The film has already been turning a few heads and we're grateful to be a part of it. I guess, it would depend on what it is people want to use the songs for.

SP!: What are some of the gigs that you will be playing in the near future?

sjj: More local things here in Helsinki. Our favorite venue is the Semifinal Club, sort of the CBGBs of Finland. We're looking forward to doing a Halloween gig there, end of October.

SP!: Where can people find you on the web?

sjj: www.facebook.com/LoveGrapes

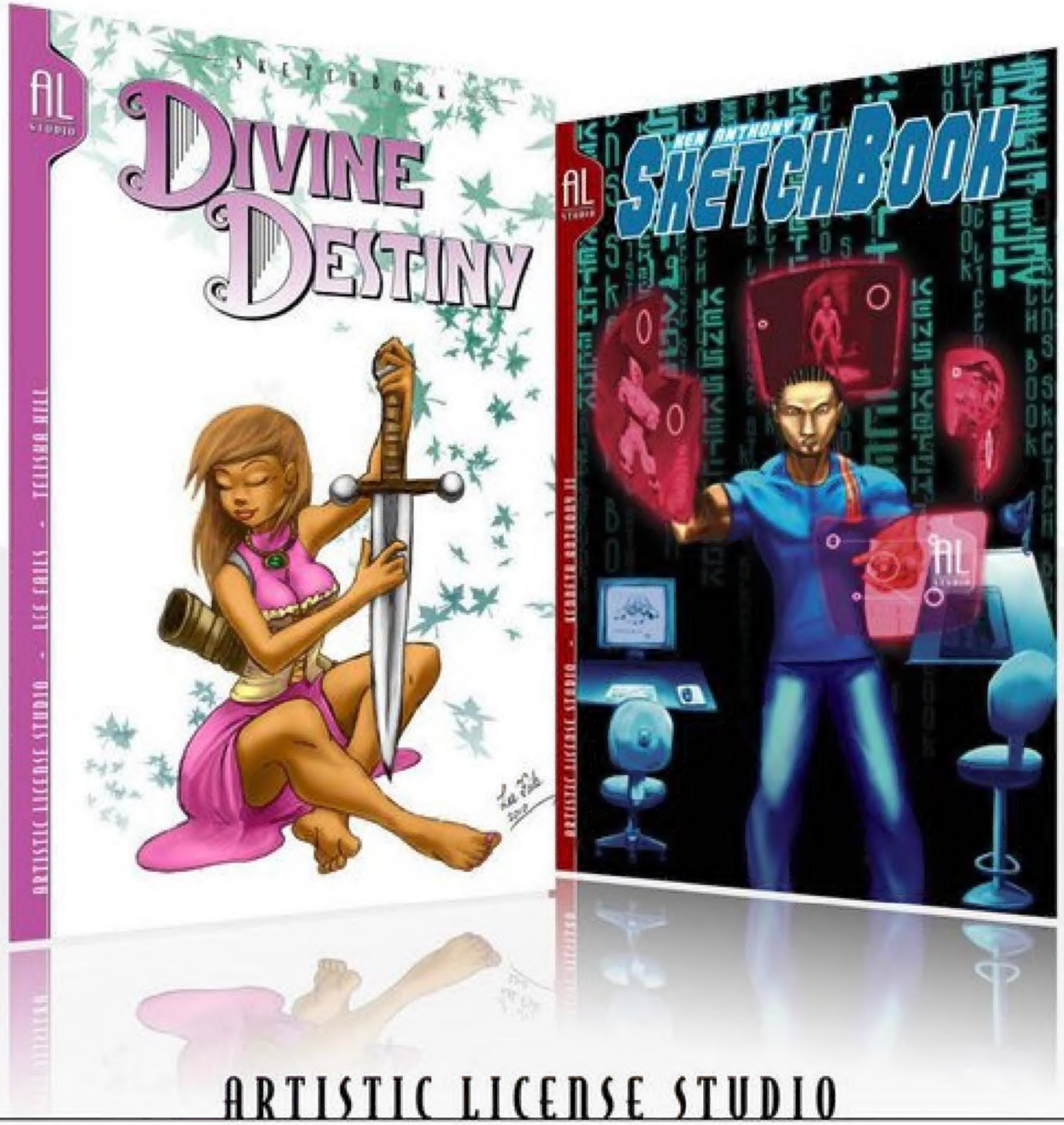
And here's our bio, for what it's worth:

The whole thing started back in 2006, when small-j jonny introduced Bleached Lightning and White Nitro to some songs he and a few friends had been working on. After a few years of trying things out with different drummers and guitarists, they finally met up with Nikotine Fit and The Kid. The rest—as some may say—was history in the making! People tend to spot elements from various American based rock bands of the late 60s and early 70s in LoveGrapes. To date, no two have completely agreed yet on which bands they might be.

LoveGrapes is:

small-j: from California—Words, Voice
White Nitro: from Helsinki—Bass
The Kid: from Helsinki—Guitar
Nikotine Fit: from Lapland—Percussions
Bleached Lightening: from Helsinki—Organ, Piano

John Wilson is a lifelong music fan and a failed drummer, due to having no skills at all. He is also a co-owner to the pop culture website Comic Related (http://www.comicrelated.com), a contributor to Comic Book Mentor (http://www.comicmentor.com), and a member of the team behind Derby City Comic Con (http://www.derbycitycomiccon.com).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SOLO SHOTS
Divine Destiny
Heart of Heroes
Galleria
Galleria

A Written View: Where Are You Going/The Hook

Article by Douglas Owen

A friend of mine writes the last sentence or paragraph of a chapter first and then starts writing towards it. I shake my head every time I watch him do it. Another friend of mine just sits down and starts writing. I tried I,t but I just have a hard time not knowing where I am going. Personally, I write out a brief chapter outline describing the scene and what happens in it. The first is called a backer, the next is called a pantser, and I'm an outliner. Which one are you?

Honestly, I have the main thought of the overlying story built and start writing the chapter layouts well ahead of the game. It's how I write and it's the comfort zone I enjoy. Even with this article, I have a layout sitting here and I am following it. Will it mean the article is completed after I finish typing? No, but it will be close.

It is the same with a backer: the end is first, they write towards it, and yes, the ending may be different by a small margin when they get to it, but not by much. So it is a development towards an end and something I personally shake my head at.
My friend Melody has an idea, but no outline. She just writes and writes from start to finish. Her style seems to work for her, but it would drive me absolutely insane.

What I am trying to say is that there is no right or wrong way to write; there is only what works for you.

Next, we come to *the hook*.

So what is a hook? It is the part of your writing which tells the reader they need to read more. It can be a clue into a lovable character's psyche, an event that is unexplained, or an even from the past that comes up. You can put the hook in the first few paragraphs or at the end of the chapter. Needless to say, you need to "hook" the reader with something that will grab their interest. Here's an example:

I open my eyes and focus in time to see Bill's fist coming at me. I don't move. The impact is hard, but not as hard as it usually is when he hits me. My jaw loosens from the impact, and my head bounces off the locker behind me. Bill is the resident bully. He finds enjoyment in fighting kids he knows he can take.

"Leave me alone," I whimper. Asshole. "Someone help–"

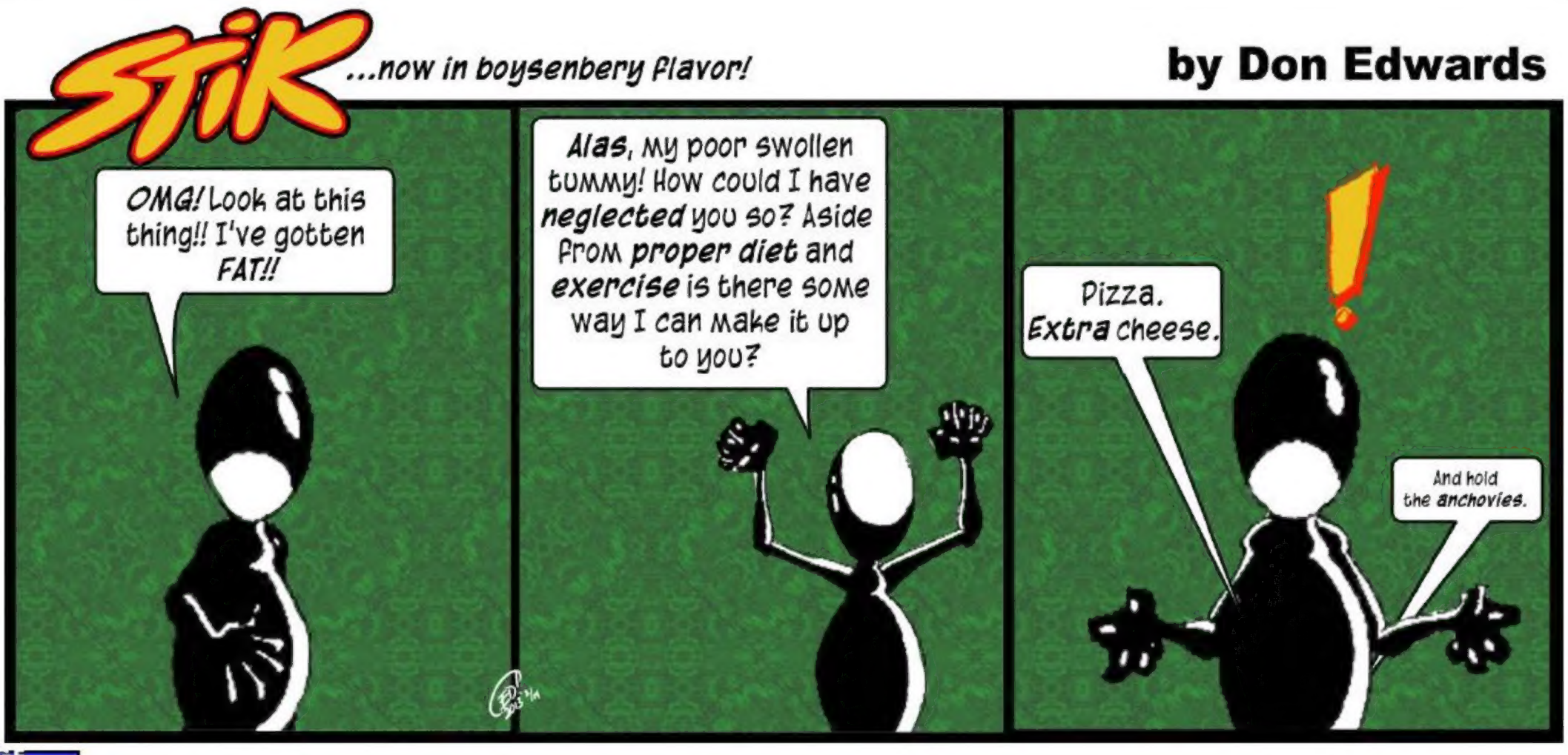
Another punch strikes my stomach, and I struggle to keep my lunch from making a second appearance. My legs almost give out and my back slides across the lockers. I'm desperate and need to escape the beating Bill is inflicting upon me. My legs wobble under me and I'm disoriented. I have turned out to be his favorite punching bag, for some reason.

So the hook here makes you really want to know what is happening to the main character. Why is he being beaten up and what will happen next? The action pulls the reader in and they continue to read, because you have *hooked* them.

But do you let up? No, you keep writing, pulling the reader in further. The first pages are the ones the reader will read when they look at the book on the shelf. The first few pages are what all ebook sellers show a prospective reader, so remember to make them good.

That is the hook, the thing that makes a reader want to purchase your work. Without it, your book just sits on the shelf collecting dust.

Next issue: The First Five Pages.


STIK
...now in boysenbery flavor!
by Don Edwards
OMG! Look at this thing!! I've gotten FAT!!
Alas, my poor swollen tummy! How could I have neglected you so? Aside from proper diet and exercise is there some way I can make it up to you?
Pizza. Extra cheese.
And hold the anchovies.

The Fishbowl Chronicles—Pt.2

Article by Mark Turner

Welcome to The Fishbowl Chronicles, where readers get a peek into the process of comic book creation from the perspective of a newbie. From a distance, the idea seems simple enough. You have a great idea for what you think would make an incredible comic book series. Easy enough to whip something together and then present it to the masses who will beat a path to your door, right? Not so much. An idea is one thing, execution is another.

As a writer, I have a million ideas a day—and until they end up on the page, that is all they are: ideas. An idea needs to find life through a process of "fleshing out". In other words, to build the perfect monster, you've got to put some meat on those bones. Your idea serves as your framework and needs muscle, tendons, guts, fluid, and tissue before it can be considered a bona fide story. Okay, maybe the literary metaphors of viscera might be a bit much, but what it boils down to is, for there to be a story, five basic elements need to be present: Character, Setting, Plot, Conflict, and Theme. Now, does this mean that if I have all of these elements present in my work that it will not suck? Unfortunately, no... but it will go a long way towards building a solid foundation that, when applied, will provide an accessible narrative structure. Before heading into the lab and slapping all these parts together, let's take a quick peek at them.

Character: A character is a person, animal, or entity who takes part in the action of the story.

Setting: The time and place in which our events happen. (The use of descriptions of scenery, buildings, seasons, weather, and landscape help to create a strong sense of where a story takes place.)

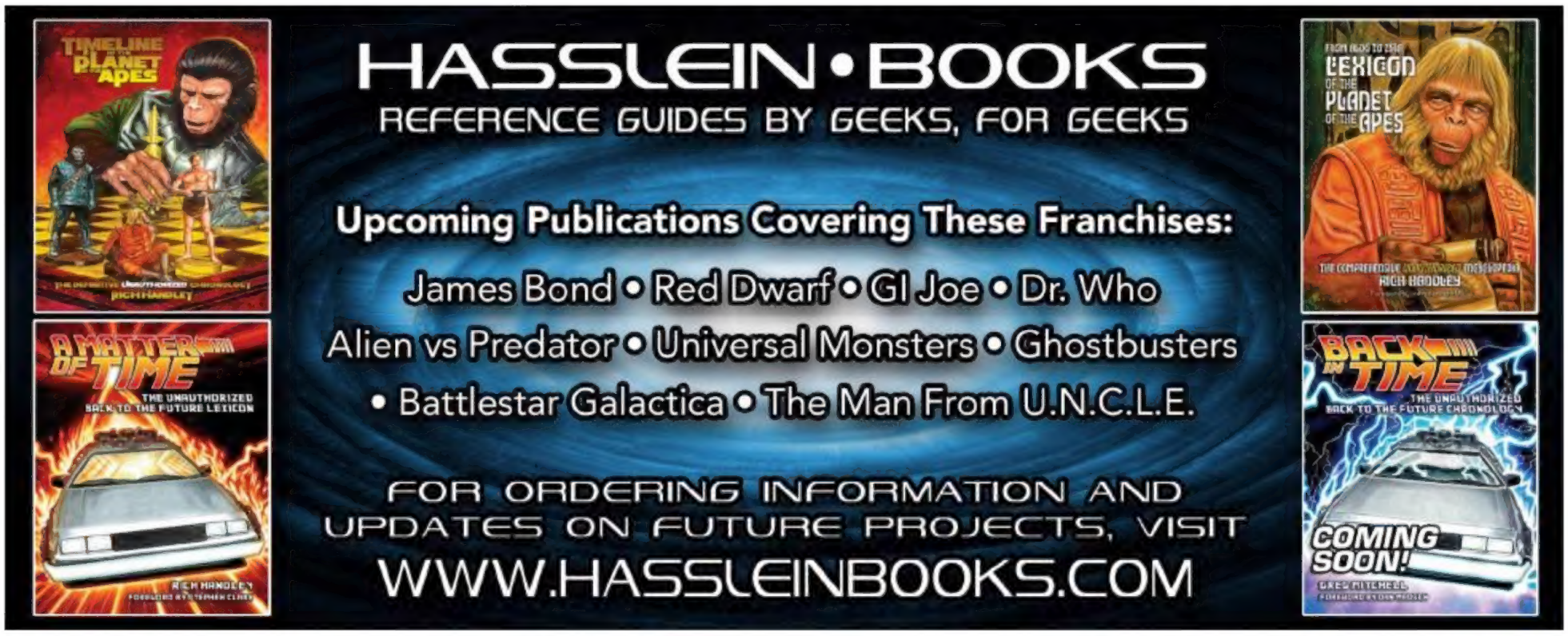
Plot: A series of events and character actions that are related to the central conflict of the story.

Conflict: The struggle between opposing forces in the story. It creates the drama and action that moves the story from start to finish. These forces can be external or internal (for example: emotional , illness, etc).

Theme: The central idea or belief. Theme answers the question, "What did you learn from this?"

When you can sit down and answer the questions of the who, what, where, how, and when of the above elements with regard to your idea and put it all down on paper, you are on the path to crafting a story.

Quite often, in my case, I reach this end sweating, as I just plain drag it out of my head while it kicks and screams. Once that part of the creative dance is over and it is written down, I start to outline. This road map will not only help me see where I am going, but also helps to give me a great overview of holes or problems that I have not totally thought through. Even better, this whole process of "fleshing it out" helps to create a coherent concept that will sound a lot better than the unintelligent gibbering I often inflict on others, when trying to convey a half-baked idea (for which many of my friends and family who are subjected to my ranting are thankful). So, after all of that, what started as a germ of an idea and now stands towering as a hulked out, ready to wreck minds, story. Am I ready for the big time? Hardly. It's a journey of a thousand steps (well, a lot more than that, really) and this is just the first. Where do I go from here, what do I do? Well, that's fodder for another column at another time. Oh wait, but I do have a name for this creature that I have stitched together. It is called *Sea Wulfe* and it lives! So until the next episode here in the bowl, keep dreaming!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